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Amnesty exposes Russian war crimes

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TSO cancels pianist over hateful comments

But Lisitsa still scheduled to perform in Calgary

By Marco Levytsky

The Toronto Symphony Orchestra has cancelled an appearance by ethnic Russian pianist Valentina Lisitsa following complaints by the Ukrainian community about hateful comments she has made on her Twitter page.

However, Valentina Lisitsa, who was born in Kyiv and currently lives in North Carolina, is still scheduled to perform in Calgary, June 5 and 6.

In announcing the cancellation of her Toronto performance TSO President & CEO Jeff Melanson stated: "Due to ongoing accusations of deeply offensive language by Ukrainian media outlets, we have decided to replace Valentina Lisitsa in our April 8 and 9 performances of Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 2. Valentina Lisitsa's provocative comments have overshadowed past performances. As one of Canada's most important cultural institutions, our priority must remain on being a stage for the world's great works of music, and not for opinions that some believe to be deeply offensive."

Valentina Lisitsa

But the official position of the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra, as emailed to Ukrainian News by their Communications Manager Marie Pollock following a telephone conversation with Ukrainian News is as follows:

"Whether or not one agrees with Ms. Lisitsa's political views, at this time at the CPO, our agreement with her is as a guest artist, to perform Rachmaninoff's Second Piano Concerto with our orchestra in June."

According to the CPO's website the evening also includes a "pre-concert chat" and "post-concert afterthoughts", but when asked whether Lisitsa would be present for the chat, Pollock replied it could be the guest artist or a member of the CPO.

Among the many tweets on her "NedoUkraïnka" site, Lisitsa refers to Ukrainians as dog feces and "khakhly", a derogatory term equivalent to "kike" or "nigger", and runs photos of Ukrainian teachers and student wearing embroidered shirts juxtaposed with

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Христос Воскрес!

The Harrowing of Hades is one of the most familiar icons in Eastern Christianity. It is the traditional icon for Holy Saturday, and is used during the Paschal season and on Sundays throughout the year. It does not depict simply the physical act of Jesus' coming out of the Tomb, but rather it depicts what Eastern Christians believe to be the spiritual reality of what his Death and Resurrection accomplished. The icon shows Jesus, vested in white and gold to symbolize His Divine Majesty, standing on the brazen gates of Hades, which are broken and have fallen in the form of a cross, illustrating the belief that by his death on the cross, Jesus trampled down death. He is holding Adam and Eve and pulling them up out of Hades. Traditionally, He is not shown holding them by the hands, but by their wrists, to illustrate the theological teaching that humankind could not pull itself out of its ancestral sin, but that it could come about only by the work (energia) of God. Jesus is surrounded by various righteous figures from the Old Testament; the bottom of the icon depicts Hades as a chasm of darkness.

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На Яворівському полігоні нацгвардійців навчатимуть американські десантники

20 квітня на Львівщині розпочнуть спільні військові навчання

Галина Терещук, *Радіо Свобода*

20 квітня на Яворівському полігоні на Львівщині розпочнуться спільні навчання за участю 1800 військовослужбовців із 16 країн світу. Вони триватимуть до листопада і відбуватимуться за стандартами НАТО. Хоча міжнародні навчання на полігоні проводяться з 1996 року, але цього розу вони особливі.

Особливість навчань у тому, що у них вперше беруть участь бійці Нацгвардії. Їх тренуватимуть близько 300 американських десантників-інструкторів. Вишкіл проходитиме у три етапи по вісім тижнів, у кожному братиме участь по 300 українських бійців батальйонів «Азов», імені Кульчицького, «Ягуар», «Омега», інших частин з Києва, Харкова, Запоріжжя, Одеси, Львова, Івано-Франківська та Вінниці. Усі вони брали участь у бойових діях на Донбасі.

Бійці Нацгвардії сьогодні виконують бойові завдання на Сході України, а раніше внутрішні війська охороняли громадський порядок. Нині важлива взаємодія між Збройними силами і Нацгвардією у зоні бойових дій, зазначають фахівці.

«Те, що США проводять навчання саме із Національною гвардією, має дати сигнал Росії, що це структура, яка користується довірою з боку західних партнерів і буде надалі розвиватися. На тактичному рівні досвід у наших підрозділів є, але ми не приділяли уваги розвитку Збройних сил, нехтували питаннями взаємодії, яка повинна бути під час АТО. Має бути локалізація певної

ФОТО — ГАЛИНА ТЕРЕЩУК, РАДІО СВОБОДА

Українські військові на Яворівському полігоні

території Збройними силами при необхідності проведення штурмів, другою чергою вступає Нацгвардія, яка займається зачисткою території, запровадженням комендантської години, функціонування місцевих органів влади», – каже військовий експерт Володимир Гулима.

Досвід і навики, здобуті під час навчань, за його словами, у кілька разів підвищать ефективність дій бійців у зоні бойових дій.

Тактика ведення бою, засоби комунікації, індивідуальний захист, надання медичної допомоги під час навчань відбуватимуться за стандартами НАТО.

Українським бійцям важливо працювати над тактикою ведення бою, про це розповіли Радіо Свобода грузинські військовослужбовці, які третій тиждень навчають новобранців на Львівщині. І можуть порівняти свій вишкіл, який здобули на війні у Грузії, а також під час навчань у натівських підрозділах. Підполковник, колишній начальник контррозвідки Міноборони Грузії Іраклій Курасбедіані від червня перебуває в Україні. Не лише консультує українських бійців, але й сам брав участь у боях на Донбасі.

«Приходять служити дуже патріотичні хлопці, вони хочуть всьому навчитись. Звісно, у нас є досвід ведення бойових дій, ми пройшли вишкіл у натівських партнерів. Наше головне завдання з нашими українськими колегами – систематизувати все і навчити бійців. Нині багато говорять про потребу в зброї, але, крім зброї, треба змінювати управління військами і менеджмент. Цього саме бракує», – каже Іраклій Курасбедіані.

Шестеро грузинських військовослужбовців, які пройшли війну у себе на батьківщині та навчання у натівських підрозділах, виокремлюють високу мотивацію серед українських бійців, які хочуть вчитись. Але водночас наголошують, що правильна тактика при веденні бою допомагає вижити.

Навчання на Яворівському полігоні у квітні – це демонстрація НАТО своєї позиції щодо України, наголошує військовий експерт Володимир Гулима. Повідомлення про те, що військовослужбовці НАТО тренуватимуть Нацгвардію, спричинили негативну, втім, очікувану реакцію Росії.

Також міністерство оборони Польщі з червня проводитиме на своїх тренувальних базах вишкіл для українських курсантів, які потім навчатимуть сержантів. Тренування фінансує НАТО і Міністерство національної оборони Польщі.

«Чим частіше українські Збройні сили братимуть участь у міжнародних навчаннях, тим спокійніше почуватимуть себе наші громадяни. Це збереже життя військових і місцевого населення, де ведуться бойові дії. Нас навчили виконувати багато функцій і завдань, але під час навчань це подаватиметься в іншому форматі зі сторони представників країн НАТО. Нам доведеться багато працювати», – наголосив підполковник, речник Західного регіонального медіацентру Олександр Поронюк.

17 березня Верховна Рада ухвалила рішення про те, що іноземні військові можуть брати участь у навчаннях в Україні. Таке дещо запізніле рішення може спричинити, на думку фахівців, деякі труднощі у логістиці при перетині кордону іноземними військовими. Адже вони привезуть спеціально для навчань техніку і зброю. Однак після завершення тренувань цю зброю заберуть.

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Сина Азарова оголосили у розшук

(Радіо Свобода)—Міністерство внутрішніх справ України оголосило у розшук сина колишнього українського прем'єра Миколи Азарова Олексія. Відповідна інформація розміщена на сайті МВС у розділі «особи, які переховуються від органів влади».

У МВС зазначають, що Азарова-молодшого підозрюють в отриманні хабара в особливо великих розмірах – частина 3 статті 368-2 Кримінального кодексу України.

За інформацією українських правоохоронців, востаннє Олексія Азарова бачили у Харкові 20 лютого 2014 року.

На початку березня Європейський союз виключив із санкційного списку чотирьох українських колишніх високопосадовців. У новому списку санкцій немає колишнього радника президента Андрія Портнова, екс-голови Служби безпеки Олександра Якименка, колишнього радника президента Ігоря Калініна і сина екс-прем'єр-міністра Миколи Азарова Олексія Азарова.

Rebels killing captured soldiers, Amnesty says

(UkrNews)—Amnesty International says it has uncovered evidence that pro-Russian terrorists in eastern Ukraine have been killing captured Ukrainian soldiers.

Referring to "shocking new evidence" of "execution-style killings" by pro-Russian armed groups in Donbas, the international human rights organization sais this "illustrates the urgent need for action to tackle the escalating human rights and humanitarian crisis in the area", in a media release issued April 9

"The new evidence of these summary killings confirms what we have suspected for a long time. The question now is: what are the separatist leaders going to do about it?" said Denis Krivosheev, Europe and Central Asia Deputy Director at Amnesty International.

"The torture, ill-treatment and killing of captured, surrendered or wounded soldiers are war crimes. These claims must be promptly, thoroughly and impartially investigated, and the perpetrators prosecuted in fair trials by recognized authorities."

Footage reviewed by Amnesty International shows Ukrainian soldier Ihor Branovytsky, one of the defenders of Donetsk airport, taken captive and interrogated. The video, posted on YouTube, shows signs that he was hit in the face. He remained in captivity until he was killed.

A number of individuals claim to have seen Branovytsky being shot and killed point-blank by a separatist commander. His body was returned to his family earlier this month and he was buried in Kyiv on April 3. The Ukrainian security services have opened an investigation into his killing.

Amnesty International has also seen videos documenting the captivity, and pictures of the dead bodies, of at least three other members of the Ukrainian armed forces, reportedly being held in a morgue in Donetsk. There are signs of bullet wounds to their heads and upper parts of their bodies, apparently the result of execution-style killings. The soldiers had been captured by pro-Russian forces in Debaltseve between February 12 and 18 when the defending Ukrainian forces were encircled there.

The revelation follows a report by the Ukrainian newspaper Kyiv Post on April 6 featuring a phone interview, allegedly made by Arseniy Pavlov, better known by his nom-de-guerre "Motorola". Pavlov, reportedly a Russian national and the leader of the pro-Russian armed group known as "Sparta Battalion" operating in eastern Ukraine, claimed he had "shot dead" 15 soldiers captured from the Ukrainian armed forces. He is alleged to have killed Ihor Branovytsky.

"This chilling 'confession' from a separatist fighter, alongside video evidence and testimony from witnesses, and the mounting evidence of abuses of captives by both sides, highlights the urgent need for an independent investigation into this and all other allegations of abuses in this conflict which began a year ago," said Krivosheev.

"Summary killings are a war crime, plain and simple. The leaders of the self-styled 'Donetsk People's Republic' in eastern Ukraine must send their members a clear message: those who fight with them or on their behalf must respect the laws of war. They must urgently remove from their ranks anyone suspected of responsibility for ordering or committing serious violations of international humanitarian law and human rights abuses, and fully cooperate with any independent investigation."

As parties to the armed conflict, armed groups such as "Sparta Battalion" are legally bound by the rules of international humanitarian law – the laws of war – which prohibit, among other things, torture and other ill-treatment and the killing of detainees.

Lisitsa still scheduled to perform in Calgary

Cont. from P. 1

African villagers with the comment "teachers forced to wear Ukrainian tribal dress" suggesting both are un-European, then takes a swipe at the Jews by reminding Garry Kasparov "that his adorable western democracies enthusiastically deported his people (i.e. the Jews) to gas chambers, and concludes by mocking people with Down Syndrome.

She has compared the Ukrainian government with Nazi Germany and referred to "Filtration camps" where pro-Russians are held.

"In a new European Ukraine, the camps will give the subhumans [ethnic Russians] condemned to gas chambers an opportunity to offset their carbon footprint," she says in one.

"I had written to the TSO expressing our concerns that Ms. Lisitsa not be allowed to perform because of her public posts on social media that were intentionally intended to incite hatred of Ukrainians. You can see from her posts that her many comments were intended to promote hatred toward an ethnic group which is prohibited under the Criminal Code," stated Ukrainian Canadian Congress President Paul Grod.

In a later Op-ed piece, he elaborated noting that "Lisitsa is well past the line between freedom of expression and hate speech as established by Canadian legislation and defined by our courts."

"Just as the National Basketball Association was justified in banning LA Clippers owner Donald Sterling for life over racist comments, so too is the TSO. In fact, all other performing arts centers should follow their leadership. There should be zero tolerance by arts, sports or other entities that serve the public to tolerate performers (or staff for the matter) that make racist remarks or propagate hate speech both on and off-stage."

"Canadians takes the issue of hate-speech that promotes racial or ethnic hatred very seriously and Canada has convicted hate mongers like James Keegstra for public incitement of hatred. Painting hate speech as freedom of expression or political opinion is nothing more than obfuscation. The abuse of free speech has no place in a truly democratic society.

"Music is supposed to unite people of all nationalities and ethnicities. It is in this spirit that the Toronto Symphony Orchestra has provided a message of human accord and harmony to countless audiences. Ms. Lisitsa's repugnant comments are divisive, intolerant and hateful, and are an affront to all Canadians who oppose racism and hate-mongering speech," says Grod.

Lisitsa insists she has been censored by the TSO for expressing her political views as a "private person."

She has also described herself as taking an "anti-war stance", comparing herself to musicians who took a stand against President George W. Bush's war in Iraq.

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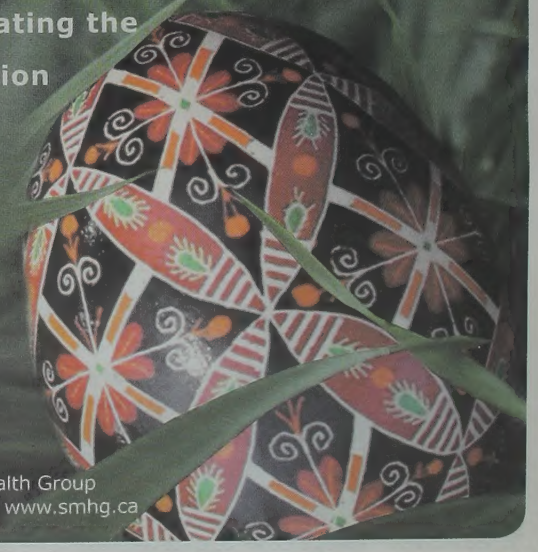
Greetings to our Ukrainian community on celebrating the Resurrection of Christ!



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Чим депутат Чубаров допоможе Криму?

Іван Путілов. *Радіо Свобода*

Голова Меджлісу кримськотатарського народу Рефат Чубаров отримає повноваження народного депутата України. Він займе місце Степана Барни, який став головою Тернопільської ОДА і склав депутатські повноваження. Крім того, Чубарова 3 квітня призначили головою Ради представників кримських татар при президентові України. Політологи вважають, що входження голови Меджлісу до парламенту може суттєво активізувати роботу української влади з повернення контролю над Кримом, а створення Ради представників кримських татар об'єднає членів Меджлісу, які були вигнані з півострова Росією.

Чи стане Рефат Чубаров депутатом, було інтригою до останнього моменту. У виборчому списку «Блоку Петра Порошенка» він був аж на 71-й позиції, тоді як за підсумками виборів партія набрала лише 22% і претендувала тільки на 50 депутатських місць у парламенті. Однак, багато членів президентської фракції пішли працювати у виконавчу владу і склали депутатські повноваження.

2 квітня Порошенко призначив депутата Степана Барну головою Тернопільської облдержадміністрації, і таким чином звільнилося чергове місце у фракції БПП, яке займе Чубаров.

У прес-службі «Блоку Петра Порошенка» кореспонденту «Крим. Реалії» повідомили, що про входження Чубарова до лав депутатів Верховної Ради буде оголошено з початком нової сесії.

«Рефат Чубаров – це дуже відома і дуже глибока особистість, ми раді з такими працювати», – зазначили в прес-службі.

Сам голова Меджлісу в коментарі для «Крим.Реалії» лаконічно відповів на питання про свої плани на новому робочому місці.

«Для мене це буде майданчик, який зміцнює мої можливості і надасть нові можливості», – сказав він. Більш докладну відповідь Чубаров пообіцяв дати пізніше.

3 квітня стало відомо про ще одне призначення голови Меджлісу. Петро Порошенко підписав указ, яким призначив Рефата Чубарова головою Ради представників кримськотатарського народу – структури, яка була створена ще під час президентства Леоніда Кучми, але до останнього часу не функціонувала.

Указом Порошенка також були внесені зміни до положення про Раду представників кримськотатарського народу. Зокрема, керівником Ради призначається голова Меджлісу кримськотатарського народу. Голову Ради призначає і звільняє від виконання обов'язків президент.

«Голова Ради затверджує персональний склад і здійснює керівництво її діяльністю. Голова та інші члени Ради беруть участь у її роботі на громадських засадах. Також місце роботи Ради представників кримськотатарського народу переноситься з Сімферополя в окупованому Криму до Києва», – відзначили в прес-службі Порошенка.

Чим саме займатиметься Рада представників кримськотатарського народу, поки не відомо. Раніше вона виконувала роль консультативно-дорадчого органу при президентові України, основними завданнями якого були аналіз, прогнозування та підготовка пропозицій з політико-правових, соціально-економічних, культурних та інших питань, пов'язаних з правами кримськотатарського народу та його інтеграцією в українське суспільство.

Входження Рефата Чубарова до складу Верховної Ради було позитивно сприйняте членами і прихильниками Меджлісу як у Криму, так і на материковій Україні. Голова Центрвиборчкому Курултаю Заїр Смедляєв у коментарі для «Крим.Реалії» сказав, що отримання депутатського мандата головою Меджлісу вигідне як для Криму і кримських татар, так і для України.

«Це чесний, принциповий політик, непоганий оратор, людина, яка працює на благо суспільства. Але багато речей, звичайно, будуть залежати від ситуації в світі», – сказав Смедляєв.

Голова херсонського регіонального Меджлісу Асан Алієв стверджує, що близько 12 тисяч кримських татар, що проживають на Херсонщині, гаряче підтримують Чубарова і вітають його призначення.

«Сьогодні, на нашу спільну думку, Рефат Чубаров входить в десятку найкращих політиків України. Це дуже потужна людина, що володіє харизмою і великими знаннями. Його дуже поважає кримськотатарський народ, бо він на міжнародній арені з честю захищає всіх нас», – сказав Алієв.

За його словами, кримські татари, які проживають в Херсонській області, чекають від Чубарова і його колег ініціатив, які забезпечать піднесення національної культури в регіоні, а також підтримки вимушених переселенців з Криму. Також Алієв сподівається на те, що входження голови Меджлісу в парламент дозволить більш ефективно боротися за повернення контролю над анексованим півостровом.

У той же час, кримські татари, які працюють в структурах фактичної влади Криму, негативно оцінюють як діяльність Рефата Чубарова, так і його потрапляння в український парламент. Так, «депутат Державної ради Криму» Едіп Гафаров в коментарі для «Крим.Реалії» сказав, що Чубаров не вперше отримує мандат нардепа, але не зробив нічого корисного для кримських татар.

«Це його особиста справа. Він там собі знайшов роботу, буде отримувати більшу зарплату. Він і так її отримував більшу. Хай сидить там в Києві й годує свою сім'ю. Що я ще можу сказати?» – відреагував Гафаров.

Багато українських експертів і громадянських активістів сходяться на думці, що законодавча і виконавча влада робить занадто мало для повернення контролю над Кримом. Політтехнолог, керівник проекту Free Crimea Тарас Березовець вважає, що входження Рефата Чубарова до складу Верховної Ради може посприяти усуненню цієї проблеми.

«Це надзвичайно позитивний сигнал. На жаль, пан Джемілєв бився там практично наодинці. Є там ще міжфракційна група «Крим», яку очолює Олексій Гончаренко. Це важливо, що вони там присутні. Але проблеми кримчан краще розуміють люди з півострова», – сказав експерт.

На думку експерта, Чубаров своїми виступами на міжнародних майданчиках та іншими діями довів, що може ефективно боротися за повернення півострова.

«Багато у чому завдяки Чубарову сьогодні відбулося відновлення інтересу до Криму. Тому що цей інтерес згасав. Рік тому було багато політичних заяв, а потім був штиль, нічого не відбувалося. І коли почали активно працювати експерти, і свою місію виконав Чубаров, відбулися зміни», – сказав Березовець.

Багато членів міжфракційної групи «Крим» також сподіваються, що з приходом голови Меджлісу їхня робота буде посилена. Народний депутат Георгій Логвинський вважає, що і у самого Чубарова тепер з'явиться більше можливості реалізовувати свої плани.

«Я знаю, що Рефат піде до нас в комітет з прав людини, що ще більше посилить позицію комітету, і дозволить залучати більше уваги до проблеми Криму та окупованих територій», – сказав нардеп.

А наскільки дієздатним органом виявиться новостворена Рада представників кримськотатарського народу, поки залишається невідомим. Експерт Інституту демократії ім. Пилипа Орлика Наталя Беліцер вважає, що майбутнє цієї структури залежить від її персонального складу, а також від того, яку стратегію обере цей орган.

«Рефат Чубаров – це мудра людина і досвідчений політик, і, по-моєму, він зможе внести пропозиції, і сподіваюся, що вони будуть максимально взяті до уваги», – сказала Беліцер у коментарі для «Крим.Реалії».

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Russia plans spring offensive, warns ex-NATO chief

By Ashish Kumar Sen,
Atlantic Council March 30, 2015

Russian-backed separatists are planning a fresh offensive in eastern Ukraine that could come within a matter of months, retired Gen. Wesley Clark, a former NATO Supreme Allied Commander, warned March 30.

"What is happening now are preparations for a renewed offensive from the east," and this could take place following Orthodox Easter, on April 12, and "most probably" before VE Day on May 8, Clark said, citing multiple local sources he spoke with on a recent fact-finding mission to Ukraine.

"That's what all the talking is about right now, preparing the cover for the next attack," he said.

Given that an attack is "imminent," Clark said the Obama administration should take two specific actions to bolster Ukrainian security forces:

• It should share intelligence with Ukraine so the Ukrainians can have "firm warning of a renewed Russian offensive";

• And it could prepare an aid package, including lethal assistance that has already been authorized by Congress; deploy it at a staging base; have strategic lift available; and warn Russian President Vladimir Putin that "when we first get the indications that you are coming again we will send assistance, including lethal assistance, to Ukraine."

These two actions would fall within the parameters of the administration's current policy not to provide lethal assistance to Ukraine.

"In the event you can't change [US policy], at least you can have a package and promise it, promote it, explain it, and use it in deterrence … The fact that the United States is coming to the rescue would go like a shot of adrenalin from top to bottom of the Ukrainian armed forces," said Clark.

"At every level, people are very conscious of the fact that they are fighting what they consider the battle for Western civilization," he added. "They are fighting for us."

Clark briefed an audience at the Atlantic Council on the findings of his mid-March visit to Ukraine. He traveled with retired Lt. Gen. Patrick M. Hughes, former Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, and retired Lt. Gen. John S. Caldwell, former Army Research, Development and Acquisition Chief. The Atlantic Council and Open Society Foundations sponsored the trip.

Clark specifically laid out seven key areas of immediate military assistance for Ukraine. These are:

• Strategic imagery and other electronic/communications intelligence that is detailed and timely enough to be able to provide warning of an impending attack;

• Long-range, mobile anti-armor systems, as well as the shorter-range Javelin system, both equipped with thermal imagery;

• Secure tactical communications down to vehicle level;

• Long-range, modern counter-battery radars able to detect firing positions for long-range rockets;

• Sniper rifles with thermal or night vision sights for counter-sniper teams;

• Modern intelligence collection and electronic warfare systems effective against Russian digital communications; and

Any counter-unmanned aerial vehicle systems that can be made available on a near-term basis. The urgency here is driven by the pending Russian spring offensive. At the minimum, a palletized, emergency assistance package consisting of as many lethal components as possible should be assembled and pre-deployed for strategic airlift upon commencement of the Russian offensive.

Gen. Wesley Clark

A report produced in February by the Atlantic Council, the Brookings Institution, and the Chicago Council on Global Affairs urged the United States to give Ukraine defensive weapons and $3 billion in military aid over three years in a bid to deter Russian aggression in Eastern Europe.

Clark supported the call to provide defensive weapons, adding that Ukraine's military has fought frontline Russian forces, separatists, and high-technology weapons and drones that even US forces have not had to face.

Jan Lodal, one of the authors of that report and a Distinguished Fellow and former President of the Atlantic Council, moderated the March 30 discussion with Clark. He said Washington's "slowness" to provide this military assistance to the Ukrainians "is a major risk to us."

Russia and Ukraine agreed to the so-called Minsk II ceasefire in February. The previous Minsk agreement collapsed within days of its September 5, 2014, signing in Belarus' capital.

At the time of his visit, Clark said, "Minsk II was roughly in place. Some artillery had been pulled back by the separatists, but some had been, according to sources, concealed in forward positions."

Additional military supplies and equipment were being brought into Ukraine from across an open border with Russia, he added.

Under Minsk II, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) is to verify the withdrawal of heavy weapons. However, the OSCE is handicapped by the fact that it has only a couple of observation points, and that Russian military personnel make up more than half of its monitoring missions, said Clark. On these missions, Russian military personnel are free to check out Ukrainian positions and are bound by an "honor code" not to relay this information to Russian forces.

"OSCE is essentially non-functioning," said Clark, who led Operation Allied Force in the Kosovo War during his term as NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Europe from 1997 to 2000.

Moscow's goal in Ukraine is to bring its eastern neighbor back into Russia's orbit, said Clark. As part of that effort, Russia's war plan has four phases: terrorism, irregular forces, Russian peacekeeping forces, and a de-escalatory phase.

He said Russian special forces known as Spetsnaz had occupied buildings during operations in the eastern Ukrainian cities of Donetsk and Luhansk.

He described Putin as the "military commander" of Russia's actions in Ukraine, but cautioned against simply focusing on the Russian leader's objectives as purely being military or geographical.

"[Putin's] objective in this would be much broader than Ukraine. It would be to shatter the sense of well-being and confidence among the nations of Eastern Europe in NATO protection and, ideally, to drive a permanent wedge between the United States and its European allies, and the Western allies and Eastern Europe," he added.

The United States and the 28-member European Union imposed economic sanctions against Russian officials and companies after Moscow's annexation of Crimea and its aggression against eastern Ukraine, but as Clark said, "there are limitations to what we should expect of sanctions."

"You need a balanced approach," he explained, "You need the sanctions, you need the ability of the Ukrainians to resist, to strengthen their ability to resist, to drive this back into the diplomatic channel and to keep it there."

Luhansk republic to issue passports

(RFE/RL)—The self-proclaimed Luhansk People's Republic says it will begin issuing passports to residents of areas controlled by pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine.

The Luhansk rebels' "Council of Ministers" said it signed a regulation on April 3 allowing the entity to begin handing out passports.

The decree said the passports will be in Russian and available to people 16 years of age or older.

The regulation comes into force on April 21.

The territory, which is on part of Ukraine's Luhansk region, was declared by Russian-backed rebels in April 2014.

It has no international recognition except from Georgia's breakaway region of South Ossetia.

The rebel entity also announced on April 3 that it had opened its own bank and started paying pensions in Russian rubles.

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UN Office: 780-488-3693; Advertising: 780-488-3860
Fax: 780-488-3859; E-mail: ukrnews@shaw.ca

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Canada Shevchenko Foundation

Bravo TSO, now for the CPO

The Toronto Symphony Orchestra was absolutely right in cancelling the April 8 and 9 performance by Russian hatemonger Valentina Lisitsa and deserves our applause for doing so.

Critics say that in banning her from performing the TSO is guilty of censorship and denying her rights to free speech and her political opinions.

This is hogwash. There is a distinct difference between expressing one's political opinion, which is guaranteed by Canada's Constitution, and expressing hatred against an identifiable ethnic group which is forbidden under Canada's Criminal Code.

But that is precisely what Lisitsa is doing on her Twitter accounts by referring to Ukrainians as "khakhly", or neo-Nazis, decrying embroidered shirts as "tribal dress", falsely accusing the government of imprisoning Russians and preparing "filtration" camps for them and so on. As an ethnic Russian born in Ukraine, Lisitka's derision of ethnic Ukrainians reminds us of the racist attitude White Rhodesians and South Africans had towards the indigineous Africans they subjugated much as the Russians did Ukrainians.

For Lisitsa to compare herself with musicians who opposed the war in Iraq is absolutely ludicrous. For one thing it is Russia which invaded Ukraine – not the other way around. One may as well say Poland started World War II, which is precisely what the Nazis claimed, even going so far as to dress up German soldiers in Polish uniforms and raid a radio station in Silesia as a pretext fort their invasion.

But that is the essence of Russian propaganda, just as it was the essence of Nazi propaganda. Heads is tails, black is white, darkness is light and lies are truth. Putin is, in fact, practising the "Big Lie" theory developed by Nazi propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels, which follows the logic that people will believe any lie, providing you make it outrageous enough and repeat it as often as possible.

And that is precisely what Lisitsa is doing and compounding it by racists references – not only against Ukrainians – but also Jews, Africans and people with Down Syndrome.

Some will say that one should not mix politics with arts and since she will not making any statements she should be allowed to play. But it's not about politics, it's about hate, and since Lisitsa is using her celebrity status to propagate her hate messages to a wider audience, banning her from performing in public is making her take responsibility for this abuse of her celebrity status..

While the TSO has cancelled her performance, the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra, with whom she is scheduled to perform June 5 and 6 at the Jack Springer Concert Hall has not. In an official statement the CPO has said the following:

"Whether or not one agrees with Ms. Lisitsa's political views, at this time at the CPO, our agreement with her is as a guest artist, to perform Rachmaninoff's Second Piano Concerto with our orchestra in June."

The critical words here are "at this time", which means they may yet change their mind in the future. Therefore it is up to the Ukrainian community starting with the Ukrainian Canadian Congress Alberta Provincial Council, both city branches and all the constituent organizations that come under the UCC umbrella to make our case and point out very clearly that this is not a matter of her expressing her political views, but of her espousing hatred against an identifiable ethnic group – which is a violation of the Criminal Code of Canada. We also urge our readers to make their views known.

So call the CPO and write to them. The main administration line is: (403) 571-0270. The President and CEO is Ann Lewis Luppino at <alewis@cpo-live.com>. Heather Slater is the Artisitc Director at <hslater@cpo-live.com>.Their Communications Manager is Marie Pollock, at <mpollock@cpo-live.com>. Her direct line is (403)-571-0283.

Far more Europeans join separatists in Donbas than Isis in Syria

By Taras Kuzio, *Financial Times, March 27, 2015*

This week, St Petersburg hosted a bizarre gathering organized by the Rodina (Motherland) party of 150 European fascist and nationalist-populist political parties united in their opposition to the EU and US and in support of Russia's annexation of Crimea and invasion of eastern Ukraine. Rodina is the loyal nationalist ally of President Vladimir Putin's United Russia party and consequently plays a similar role to the Radical Party's alliance with the Serbian Socialist party.

Russia's alignment with European fascist and nationalist-populist parties would seem to contradict official rhetoric that has incessantly attacked the Ukrainian Euromaidan leaders as a fascist junta brought to power by western intelligence agencies. It also, as Timothy Snyder of Yale University has pointed, out recalls uncanny memories of the 1939-1941 Soviet-Nazi Pact that also had the goal of dividing European powers.

One sinister outgrowth of Russia's cultivation of extreme right and extreme left parties and movements in Europe is the large mobilisation of people travelling to the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine to fight for pro-Russian separatists.

There has been understandable outcry over the three young British girls who travelled to Istanbul on February 17 on their way to join Isis, the brutal terrorist organization based in Syria and Iraq. But what has gone unnoticed is the hundreds – far more Europeans than have travelled to join Isis – who have joined Russian-backed terrorists fighting Ukraine's legitimately elected leaders. The BBC reported that the influx of foreign fighters into eastern Ukraine "mirrors that of young Muslims from Britain and other parts of Europe travelling to the Middle East to fight in its wars".

Russian-backed separatists have attracted an eclectic mix of extreme left and extreme right followers, nostalgic in the former case for the USSR and the Spanish civil war and in the latter drawn by a common anti-EU and anti-US platform with Putin and the Donbas separatists. Greeks, traditionally the most pro-Russian nationals in the EU, the Hungarian Legion of St Isztvan, Serbs, French, Germans, Spaniards and volunteers from former Soviet republics such as Kyrgyzstan are fighting alongside separatists widely condemned by the UN and international human rights groups for crimes against humanity.

The eclectic group has included 20 Frenchmen from the fascist organisation Continental Unity formed in support of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and Serbian war crimes suspect Vojislav Seselj. France's far right National Front party has strongly supported Russia's annexation of the Crimea and invasion of Eastern Ukraine and has received a $10 million loan from Russia.

Not surprisingly, there are reportedly over 100 extreme right Serbs fighting for what they see as a common Orthodox religious faith and historically. Russian nationalist Igor Girkin "Strelkov" ("Shooter") who commanded Russian special forces in western Donbas until summer of 2014 had fought for the Bosnian Serbs in the 1990s.

One hundred extreme right Germans are fighting alongside the terrorists according to Die Welt. Stephan Mayer, a member of the ruling Christian Democrats, told Die Welt that Germans who participate in civil wars should be taken to court, although currently the German criminal code only punishes those who fight alongside Isis.

The Spanish Republican Guard detained a group of extreme left-wing Spaniards on their return from eastern Ukraine. Angel Davilla-Rivas, one of the Spaniards, has two big tattoos of Soviet leaders Vladimir Lenin and Joseph Stalin and explained his decision to go to Eastern Ukraine as "gratitude" for Stalin's support for the Spanish Republicans in the 1930s.

British volunteers have not reportedly gone to fight for the Donbas separatists, although the National Front (NF) and UKIP have given their support to Putin, and the NF attended this week's St Petersburg conference. The Conservative Friends of Russia, renamed the Westminster Russia Forum after a critical in-depth investigation by The Guardian, has been functioning as a pro-Kremlin lobby group with extensive support from Sergey Nalobin at the Russian Embassy in London.

British journalist Graham Phillips, who moved from the Conservatives to UKIP, has sent numerous pro-separatist reports for Russian media outlets and was detained on March 4 at Heathrow and questioned for four hours by Border Police under Schedule 7 of the 2000 Terrorism Act about his activities in the Donbas before being released without charge. The British Foreign Office is allegedly pressuring Phillips to halt his reporting from the Donbas.

Phillips does not hide his political sympathies for pro-Russian separatists and does not attempt to be impartial in a conflict zone, posting photos of him wearing lapel badges of Novorossiya (New Russia, the Tsarist term used by Putin and separatists to describe Eastern and Southern Ukraine) and cheering after separatists captured the strategic railway hub of Debaltseve.

Phillips' notoriety came into the public domain late last year when he interviewed Ukrainian prisoners and a wounded Ukrainian soldier. In the interviews, he repeatedly demands the prisoners explain why they have come to "murder civilians" and asks are they "ready to go home now and accept that it is Novorossiya here and not Ukraine". In the second interview Phillips aggressively interviews a severely burned Ukrainian soldier prisoner.

European law enforcement have been understandably concerned at their citizens travelling to join Isis, yet they have largely ignored the many more far right and far left extremists that are fighting for pro-Russian groups in Ukraine. Recent detentions in Spain and the UK were hesitant, because law enforcement officers still lack political direction as to how to respond to Russia's support for the separatists.

Taras Kuzio is a research associate at the Centre for Political and Regional Studies, Canadian Institute for Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta.

Europe ditches Ukraine as it seeks to save Greece

By George Soros, *MarketWatch, Apr 1, 2015*

A temporary collapse has shaken public confidence and endangered the balance sheets of Ukrainian banks and companies that have hard-currency debts. It has also undermined the calculations on which Ukraine's programs with the International Monetary Fund are based. The IMF's Extended Fund Facility became insufficient even before it was approved.

But EU member states, facing their own fiscal constraints, have shown no willingness to consider additional bilateral aid. So Ukraine continues to teeter on the edge of the abyss.

At the same time, a radical reform program within Ukraine is gaining momentum, and slowly becoming visible to both the Ukrainian public and the European authorities. There is a stark contrast between the deteriorating external situation and the continuing progress in internal reforms. This gives the situation in Kyiv an air of unreality.

One plausible scenario is that Putin achieves his optimal objective and Ukraine's resistance crumbles. Europe would be flooded with refugees — two million seems to be a realistic estimate. Many people expect that would mark the beginning of Cold War II. The likelier outcome is that a victorious Putin would have many friends in Europe, and that the sanctions on Russia would be allowed to lapse.

That is the worst possible outcome for Europe, which would become even more divided, turning into a battleground for influence between Putin's Russia and the United States. The EU would cease to be a functioning political force in the world (especially if Greece also left the eurozone).

A more likely scenario is that Europe muddles through by drip-feeding Ukraine. Ukraine does not collapse, but the oligarchs reassert themselves and the new Ukraine begins to resemble the old Ukraine.

Putin would find this almost as satisfactory as a complete collapse. But his victory would be less secure, as it would lead to a second Cold War that Russia would lose, just as the Soviet Union lost the first. Putin's Russia needs oil at $100 a barrel and will start running out of currency reserves in two to three years.

The latest chapter in what I call the "Tragedy of the European Union" is that the EU will lose the new Ukraine. The principles that Ukraine is defending — the very principles on which the EU is based — will be abandoned, and the EU will have to spend a lot more money on defending itself than it would need to spend helping the new Ukraine succeed.

There is also a more hopeful scenario. The new Ukraine is still alive and determined to defend itself. Though Ukraine, on its own, is no match for Russia's military might, its allies could decide to do "whatever it takes" to help, short of becoming involved in a direct military confrontation with Russia or violating the Minsk agreement. Doing so would not only help Ukraine; it would also help the EU to recapture the values and principles that it seems to have lost. Needless to say, this is the scenario I advocate.

George Soros is chairman of Soros Fund Management and of the Open Society Foundations.

Ukraine as a vital security interest for Europe

By Alexander J. Motyl

(World Affairs Journal)--An American official in Brussels recently informed me of a meeting he had with a highly placed European Union diplomat during which the latter "stressed that Ukraine is an 'almost existential' issue for Europe."

The phrase "almost existential" is worth looking at more closely. Existential issues concern the life or death of the subject concerned. A Russian attack on Germany would be an existential issue for Germany. A Russian attack on Tajikistan would be an existential issue for Tajikistan, but a non-existential issue for Germany. An almost existential issue for some country is thus something that almost concerns — or is almost equivalent to — the life and death of that country. Seen in this light, the claim that Ukraine is almost existential for Europe amounts to saying that Ukraine's life or death is almost equivalent to the life or death of Europe.

Another way of making this point is to say that Ukraine is a vital strategic interest of the West. That is, Ukraine isn't just an interest to Europe: lots of countries are. Nor is it just strategic: something on which the well-being, security, and survival of Europe depend. Ukraine is also vital: the well-being, security, and survival of Europe depend on it directly.

These are very strong words. They'll come as no surprise to Ukrainian policymakers and analysts, who've been making just this point for at least a year — if not since Ukraine's independence in 1991 — to no avail. Although the United States and the United Kingdom supposedly guaranteed Ukraine's security in the 1994 Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances, no Western country paid much attention to Ukraine or its security for more than two decades. Quite the contrary, the EU and NATO expanded all the way up to Ukraine's borders and few Western policymakers considered what that meant for Ukraine: its relegation to a security no-man's-land between a visibly indifferent West and a visibly aggressive Russia.

Had Europe recognized Ukraine's almost existential importance one or two decades earlier, Russia might not have invaded Crimea and the Donbas and the human tragedy of the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian war could have been avoided. Put this way, Europe's very belated understanding of its own vital strategic interests is a terrible indictment of its self-absorption, hypocrisy, and inefficiency. Clearly, Ukraine has to reform itself radically. But so, too, does the EU.

One Western analyst has recognized Ukraine's strategic importance from the get-go: the former national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski, who's consistently argued that the only thing standing between Russia and empire is an independent Ukraine. Just recently, Brzezinski expanded on these sentiments in an interview with Poland's Gazeta Prawna:

If the war in Ukraine turns into an easy military success for Russia, its victory, then we must reckon with something in the Baltic states. That would be the first step. Further flare-ups could take place in Moldova, Georgia, and Azerbaijan. That would be the logic of events. Next in line could be Poland.

When asked whether NATO would defend Poland, Brzezinski offered sobering advice. "Poland should arm itself," he said. The complexity of NATO procedures mean that the alliance "could be paralyzed for some time" after a Russian attack on Poland, which "should count on itself so as to be able to defend itself for as long as possible." These are scary recommendations for a country that's been partitioned four times in modern history.

Sadly, Brzezinski is right about NATO's inability to rush to the rescue even of its own members — not to mention such non-members as Ukraine. But his comments also suggest that Europe's perception of Ukraine's "almost existential" importance still has some way to go before it becomes more than a rhetorical claim. As Russian analyst Vladimir Ryzhkov says:

The West's reaction [to Putin's aggression] was not only weak, but is growing weaker by the day. It only reluctantly and belatedly imposed sanctions, without imposing an oil or gas embargo or disconnecting Russia from the SWIFT banking system — moves that would have threatened the survival of Putin's regime. What's more, after less than a year of sanctions, a growing number of Western states are already clamoring to weaken or repeal them.

Europe will truly understand the meaning of "almost existential" when it appreciates that its commitment to Ukraine must be "almost" as great as its commitment to itself.

PETER GOLDRING
Member of Parliament
Edmonton East

PROTECT THE RIGHTS OF THE POLICE AND PUBLIC

Recently it was reported that Edmonton police now have a new flying model helicopter with a camera to be flown over accident scenes; yet another toy for the boys costing $27,000. Last year they purchased a fleet of Segways for park-patrol, ending the (drudgery) pedaling of their bicycles.

The Edmonton Police has been procrastinating when it comes to purchasing up-to-date evidentiary tools like body worn cameras (BWCs), as has been done in several other Canadian and American cities. The public has to protect itself by making do with its own personal recording devices because currently evidentiary pen and paper notes can be made anywhere anytime.

The cost of the latest model helicopter would have outfitted 25 constables with body cameras that would both protect the police and public from false accusations, which is something that I can speak personally to. Let's do the right thing here, something that is fair to both police and the citizens they serve and protect. Acquire the equipment that will give transparency and protect everyone's rights. In October 2012, a small number of Edmonton's police officers with federal funding began testing the cameras in the course of their regular duties. What ever happened?

The cost savings relating to courtroom witness-time for officers and the accused would be dramatic by having actual real-time audio-visual evidence recorded at each individual event. These savings of public money in court cases more than merit purchasing cameras, allowing thousands of policing hours to be reverted to public good and even pay for what other toys the boys wish for.

On behalf of the interests of Edmontonians and Canadians, body worn cameras are affordable tools that help protect rights of the police and public. Other cities like New York, London, and Calgary agree.

What do you think?

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Support John Iwaniura for immigrant award

By Taras Zalusky,
Executive Director
Ukrainian Canadian Congress

Ivan (John) Iwaniura,

A member of the national Board of Directors of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, Mr. Ivan (John) Iwaniura, has been selected as one of the 75 finalists for the Royal Bank of Canada Top 25 Canadian Immigrant Awards program.

Ivan has been active in our community and is involved with the UCC, as a member of our advisory council, Canada Ukraine Chamber of Commerce and many other organizations. In addition, he is the President of Caravan Logistics, one of Canada's top logistics companies which has operations in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec. Ivan can always be counted on to support the community - please help spread the word, below I have provided links to the voting page.

Please support Ivan by voting for him. These awards are known as a People's Choice Award, so voting is an important part of the process to narrow down the shortlist to the final Top 25.

So I would appreciate if you would go to <canadianimmigrant.ca/rbctop25http://www.canadianimmigrant.ca/rbc25>between now and May 11, 2015, to vote for Ivan. His biography is posted there as well.

The Top 25 winners will then be announced online on June 23, 2015, and be featured in the July print edition of Canadian Immigrant magazine.

Feel free to share this message on Facebook or Twitter messages.

Our goal is to spread awareness about Ivan's outstanding accomplishments that led to his nomination and the RBC Top 25 Canadian Immigrant Awards program on a national and international scale.

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Putin's Ukraine war is about founding a new Russian Empire

Opinion

By Stephen Blank,
Atlantic Council, April 6, 2015

According to Vladimir Putin, Crimea and Ukraine are where the spiritual sources of Russia's nationhood lie. And he "always saw the Russians and Ukrainians as a single people. I still think this way now."

People observing the crisis triggered by Putin's aggression against Ukraine, therefore ought to understand what these words mean. Quite simply they mean that for Putin — and for much of Russia as well, even without the constant incitement of Kremlin propaganda — there is no such thing as a separate Ukrainian people, national identity, culture or history.

Seen through this Russian lens, the concept of a Ukrainian state independent of Russia is at best a legend or fantasy. At worst it incarnates a threat to the very existence of the Russian state. And obviously Moscow will meet that threat with violence.

But the implications of Putin's rhetoric and actions go deeper. If no Ukrainian state has the right to exist, the entire settlement of 1989 to 1991 in Eastern Europe, and especially in the former Soviet Union, is illegitimate and a standing threat to the Russian state. Thus Putin not only aims to overthrow the entire post–Cold War order in Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, he is also saying that the Russian state as such not only cannot tolerate an independent Ukraine, it can only survive as an empire.

We need to be clear about this point and what it means because empire, to put it bluntly, means permanent war or conflict. The imperial concept inherently denotes the domination of one people by another and the subjugation of the weaker state by the stronger without any possibility of democratic political expression in the colony.

Given Russian history, it is equally obvious that no autonomous political life can therefore occur in Russia itself. For Russia, empire is the logical corollary if not precondition for the preservation and extension of Putin's autocracy. Indeed, it is the only form of state that he and his entourage can envision for Russia or that they have ever known. Moreover, a Russian empire is intrinsically an inherent extra-legal form of rule whose basis is violence (as well as Dostoevsky's triune formula of mystery, miracle and authority).

Putin's objective, then, can only lead only to a perpetual state of war within the former Soviet space and a state of siege with Europe and the world. That means another Cold War, if not a series of hot wars along Russia's periphery.

Russia has already been a state in a permanent war condition since 1994 when the Chechen war broke out as what used to be called a war of national liberation. Now the entire North Caucasus is aflame with a militant Islamist uprising that Moscow cannot quell and that has become ever more brutal.

The Kremlin's 2008 war with Georgia, which Putin admitted to planning from 2006, its coercive incorporation of the Georgian territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia into Russia, and the war with Ukraine all represent a working out of this logic of imperialism and war.

Even if the Ukraine war devolves into a so-called frozen conflict, that logic will still be operative. We already have seen how quickly frozen conflicts can become unfrozen and how they corrode civility and democracy throughout their regions. Beyond that, a renewed Russian empire essentially reincarnates the idea that Russia is not safe unless everyone connected to it, and not only its immediate neighbors, is unsafe or insecure.

This state can only be preserved then by what the late Russian defense analyst, Vitaly Shlykov, called structural militarization. And we see that happening now with the growth of the defense sector as the rest of the economy shrivels due to sanctions and falling energy prices.

This is what is at stake in Ukraine. It is not just a quarrel over the fate of Ukraine. It is a war for the future of Russia and beyond that for the long-term future of European and Eurasian security. And to the extent that we hide behind rhetoric that masks a deeper inaction or complacency about Russia and Ukraine, we are only storing up for ourselves and future generations a larger continental crisis.

That crisis, even if we ignore it now, will inevitably occur when the unsustainability of this imperial adventure becomes fully clear not to analysts in the West but to the Russian people and their government. For this regime, unlike Gorbachev's, will not go peacefully. In a country that is arming itself to the hilt, and that possesses nuclear weapons, that is a terrifying future.

Thus inactivity today only ensures and accelerates the onset of the much larger conflict that Putin's action will inevitably bring upon Russia.

Stephen Blank is a senior fellow for Russia at the American Foreign Policy Council.

Separatist leader hails relationship with Akhmetov

By Alyona Zhuk, *Kyiv Post+*

Oleksandr Borodai, the former prime minister of the self-proclaimed People's Republic of Donetsk (DPR), says that there is a reason why the port city of Mariupol was not taken by separatists in September, "when there were such opportunities".

He says it was done to facilitate the business of Rinat Akhmetov, a Ukrainian billionaire whose assets are scattered around both government-controlled and separatist-controlled territories in the east of the county.

"The only port, available for Akhmetov is in Mariupol," Borodai said at the discussion club in Moscow, organized by Russian nationalist magazine "Sputnik and Pogrom". The video from the meeting was posted online on March 26.

In the discussion that lasted more than an hour, Borodai implied that there is an agreement between the self-proclaimed republic and Akhmetov to allow him to keep his assets and run his businesses, in exchange for steady employment and wages for "the citizens of DPR".

Akhmetov was less lucky in Crimea. In late February, the parliament of the peninsula nationalized the Ukrainian telecommunications company Vega, which was part of Akhmetov's SCM holding. But his assets in Donbas are still his, and many of them continue to operate.

"Mister Akhmetov, because in his time he was central to the Ukrainian politics and was the man who effectively informally controlled Ukraine, he benefits from the current state of affairs," Borodai said, adding that he doesn't know Akhmetov personally.

Akhmetov's spokesman denied any allegations of cooperation with separatists. "SCM Group, all business-related and non-business assets of Rinat Akhmetov work solely within the legal framework of Ukraine and pay taxes to the Ukrainian budget," said Elena Dovzhenko, Akhmetov's spokeswoman.

"Many rumors and factoids pursuing different kinds of provocations and manipulations are being planted in the public field regularly. So, I wish to state that neither Rinat Akhmetov nor businesses of SCM Group have or will ever comment on them," she said.

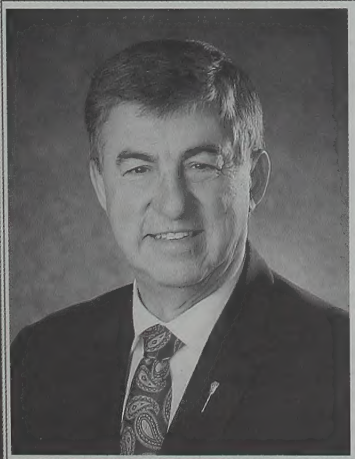
In Borodai's words, Akhmetov's assets in separatist-controlled territories continue operating because they provide jobs and help to avoid social instability in the region.

According to Borodai, goods, produced at Akhmetov's factories, can be exported only if there is an access to a Ukrainian port, as Europe considers authorities of the so-called DPR as terrorists. Many of the separatist leaders, including Borodai himself, are on the European sanctions list.

He says that if DPR decides to nationalize Akhmetov's business, none of Russia's powerful oligarchs would help the so-called republic to sell the products.

"What would that mean for DPR? Hunger. Real hunger," he said, pointing at the fact that Akhmetov's Humanitarian Center provides humanitarian aid to the region. "DPR practically lives of that aid."

Dovzhenko, however, has denied that Akhmetov's aid benefits the separatists.



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Ukrainian Orthodox bishops greet Resurrection

Paschal Epistle of the Permanent Conference of Ukrainian Orthodox Bishops beyond the Borders of Ukraine

Ed. Note: The Pastoral Easter Greeting of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Bishops of Canada appeared in the previous issue of Ukrainian News

To the God-beloved Presbyters, Honourable Monastics, and All Faithful Children of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in the Diaspora and in Ukraine

"Angels in heaven, O Christ Saviour, praise your Resurrection with hymns, make us worthy here on earth to glorify You with a pure heart." (Paschal Stykhyra)

Rt. Reverend, Very Reverend and Reverend Fathers! Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ!

CHRIST IS RISEN!

On this joyful and holy day of the Most-glorious and Divine Resurrection of our Lord, God, and Saviour Jesus Christ, we extend most heartfelt greetings to all you Orthodox Christians with the feast of the Lord's Pascha! The magnificent feast of the Resurrection of Christ calls all of us to consider again the eternal treasures of Christian teaching and offers a golden opportunity to fill our hearts with goodness and love for God and neighbour. The Resurrection of Christ unites us all through faith in the victory of light over darkness, goodness over evil and life over death. The Holy Apostle James reminds us that "as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." (Jam 2:26)

And so, on these joyful days of Pascha, we should endeavour with especial diligence to prayerfully alleviate the suffering of those oppressed by sorrow, encourage the downcast, perform acts of mercy, love and compassion, and help those in need, who are waiting for us to offer our aid. Every person, and perhaps even whole nations, experience in their lives various hardships, derision, suffering and at such times often talk about the victory of evil over good. How many times in our own lives have we ourselves fallen into despair? And so, in order to avoid disenchantment and discouragement, we must remember that evil and untruth are overcome and conquered through the Resurrection of Christ.

With faith in the Risen Christ many generations of Christians have finished their earthly journey, accomplished their ascetic struggle of fasting and prayer, patiently endured suffering and sorrow and accepted death, firmly believing in the coming resurrection and eternal life with Christ. St. John Chrysostom stated, "Today people have joined together with the angels, and, clothed in flesh, together with the bodiless powers now offer hymns. Today the dominion of the devil is destroyed, today the bonds of death are broken, the victory of evil and hell is overcome.

By His Resurrection Christ has opened to us the path to salvation". The Pascha of Christ has especially great meaning for every Ukrainian this year. We all believe and pray that the Resurrected Christ will assist our Ukrainian people and our homeland of Ukraine to be victorious over her enemy and overcome all difficulties and obstacles which our people are facing. We know that Christ the Saviour also experienced a Golgotha, after which came the Resurrection. These words give hope to our Ukrainian nation that we will be vouchsafed exceptional joy, peace, and unity following the cruel war and enmity. Our faith would not exist without the Resurrection of Christ. There would be no eternal life and without faith. Consequently, our purpose and essence of our spirituality is our belief in the Risen Christ. The Resurrection of Christ has become the heart and foundation of Christianity. The Holy Church prayerfully calls upon heaven and earth in celebration of this divine joy: "Let the heavens worthily rejoice, and let the earth be glad. Let the whole world, both visible and invisible, keep the feast; for Christ, our Eternal Joy, is Risen" (Tropar of the 1st Ode of the Paschal Canon).

May this bright Paschal joy encourage us once again to offer our thanks to the Lord for His great and limitless love for us! How should Christians respond to this Divine Love and sacrifice for us sinners? We should orient our whole life towards gratitude to God, to the fulfilling of His Commandments and to learning how to love one another as God has loved us. The path to realizing this goal has been revealed to us by the power of the Resurrection of Christ. Following the Resurrection, the Lord appeared to the Apostles and greeted them with the words "Peace be unto you." After hearing Christ's words, the Apostles felt this peace in their hearts and they felt joy and the Peace of God instead of fear. Today, the words "Peace be unto you" are very important and relevant for the Ukrainian people. The Peace which is brought by Christ is also the Peace between nations and people. In celebrating the Pascha of Christ, we should remember that the world today has many conflicts and injustices which give rise to resistance and opposition. We are not lacking in this respect. And so, may the greeting of Christ the Saviour – "Peace be unto you" – resound throughout the world, especially in our Ukraine. For our part, let us also hear the voice of the Resurrected Christ for only sincere and patient love brings us the gift of this long-awaited Peace. During these joyful spring days, the hopes and expectations of the people for a better future awaken along with the blossoming earth. Therefore, let us strive to increase our good deeds and positive thoughts, which will contribute to the renewal and unity of our Ukrainian nation. On the occasion of these festal Paschal days, we again extend our most heartfelt greetings to the clergy, deaconate, and monastics of our Ukrainian Orthodox Church in the Diaspora, to our youth and children, to all the pious Ukrainian Orthodox people in Ukraine and in the Diaspora, and especially to our brothers and sisters in Ukraine who are experiencing various kinds of difficulties and tribulations defending their homeland.

We believe and pray that a unified Orthodox Church will be established in Ukraine with the Lord's help. Only under the conditions of spiritual unity will the Ukrainian people achieve a united nation. A strong Ukrainian society cannot exist without spiritual unity. Thus, may peace, love, and unity always be among us! On this joyous day of the Glorious Resurrection of Christ, let us forgive one another all insults and offenses, embrace each other and joyfully sing: "Christ is Risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and on those in the tombs bestowing life!" Truly, Christ is Risen!

With Archpastoral Blessings,
† YURIJ, Metropolitan
Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada
† ANTONY, Metropolitan
Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA
Locum Tenens of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Diaspora
† IOAN, Archbishop
Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Diaspora
† JEREMIAH, Archbishop
Ukrainian Orthodox Eparchy of Brazil and South America
† ILARION, Bishop
Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada
† ANDRIY, Bishop
Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada
† DANIEL, Bishop
Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA

No casualties in central Kyiv bomb blast

(RFE/RL)—A bomb exploded in downtown Kyiv early in the morning on April 2.

No casualties were reported in the blast at about 4 a.m. at the entrance of a building that houses a bank branch.

It damaged doors and shattered windows of the building.

Several bombs have exploded in recent months in the southern port city of Odesa and the eastern city of Kharkiv, both outside the area held by separatists in eastern Ukraine but seen as being coveted by the Russian-backed rebels.

Many of the bombs have appeared to target organizations with ties to government forces fighting against the rebels, and Ukrainian authorities have laid blame on Russia and the rebels.

Ukraine's Security Service (SBU) on April 1 detained three people suspected of involvement in several bombings in Odesa between December and March.

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Як ефективно протистояти інформаційній агресії Росії?

Яна Борщ, *Радіо Свобода*

Неоголошена інформаційна війна та безпрецедентна інформаційна агресія Росії проти України триває вже близько року. На початку АТО експерти наголошували, що Україна програє інформаційну війну. Сьогодні вони констатують, що не відбулося ніяких радикальних змін, і наполягають – створювати стратегії протидії інформаційній агресії та втілювати їх у життя потрібно негайно.

Україна наразі має розробити стратегію інформаційної політики, якої немає і не було за всі роки незалежності, створити доктрину інформаційної безпеки та працювати над кібербезпекою, говорить медіа-фахівець Світлана Єременко. Але не можна говорити, що за час ведення інформаційного конфлікту нічого не було зроблено. Позитивних зрушень хоч і недостатньо, але вони є, каже Єременко.

«Відкрито український Кризовий медіацентр, створено інформаційно-аналітичний центр РНБО та прес-служби АТО, телеканал Ukraine today (на жаль, він не настільки потужний, щоб протидіяти «Russia today»). Створено рух «Інформаційний спротив», запроваджені щоденні брифінги Лисенка і Селезньова, ухвалений закон про телебачення і радіомовлення, відправлено до Ради Європи законопроект про реформи державних та комунальних ЗМІ», – констатує Єременко.

Держава звикла перекладати відповідальні завдання на волонтерів, зауважує Єременко, але працювати над інформаційною безпекою та кібербезпекою повинні Міністерство оборони, СБУ, РНБО та інші владні структури.

Для початку треба розділити цільову аудиторію на 5 напрямів: окупована територія Донбасу, зона проведення АТО, вільна Україна, Росія і світ, вважає експерт Центру дослідження Росії Денис Богуш. Для кожного з цих напрямів потрібно розробити схему діяльності і працювати відповідно до цієї схеми. Для ефективної протидії російській пропаганді теж потрібен чіткий план дій, зазначає Богуш.

«По-перше, потрібен професійний замовник від влади, але зараз його немає, далі системність підходу, сила сигналу і максимальне охоплення. Нам потрібно думати охватом, не просто зробити якийсь цікавий ролик в інтернеті, треба мати серйозне охоплення, щоб достукатися до тих територій, які нам потрібні. Далі – блокування російського сигналу для цільових аудиторій, і це вже робиться, пройшов вже рік цієї агресії, і зараз почали закривати російські канали, забороняти російські серіали тощо», – говорить Богуш.

Українська контрпропаганда не може бути дієвою, адже вона просто не доходить до адресата, говорить голова Фонду якісної політики Михайло Мінаков. Наприклад, у Слов'янську відновили українське телебачення і радіо, але населення його не дивиться і не слухає, через те, що мовлення ведеться українською, розповідає Мінаков.

«Таке враження в Києві складається, що є концепція, що у нас одномовна країна. Але ні. Навіть ті пропагандистські матеріали, які розумні, зважені і можуть впливати на зміну ситуації в регіонах, вони не доносяться, або доносяться не в тій формі, в якій це може бути прийнятне там. Треба зважати на реципієнтів», – робить висновок Мінаков, беручи до уваги результати опитування, зокрема у місті Слов'янську.

Медіаексперти повідомляють – для роботи з окупованими територіями та ведення інформаційної війни є безліч підходів у світовій практиці, а також громадських рекомендацій, розроблених конкретно для України. Але втілити ці методи в життя може тільки влада і вона повинна зробити це якомога швидше.

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Конфлікт в Україні – найвагоміший для світу за останні 70 років – конґресмен

Михайло Штекель,
Радіо Свобода

Київ відвідала велика делегація Конгресу США – до столиці України приїхали п'ять конгресменів з обох головних партій Америки. За словами голови делегації, республіканця Вільяма Торнберрі, конфлікт в Україні є найважливішим для США та всього світу.

Делегація конгресменів США зустрілась із президентом України, прем'єр-міністром та іншими ключовими посадовцями. Законодавці зазначили, що Україна має підтримку обох партій Конгресу та більшості американських громадян.

Відповідаючи на запитання Радіо Свобода, голова делегації Вільям Торнберрі наголосив, що конфлікт в Україні є набагато важливішим для стабільності у світі, ніж війна із Ісламською державою.

«В світі зараз існує багато конфліктів, але я думаю, що жоден з них не є важливішим, ніж конфлікт в Україні. Цей акт агресії загрожує стабільності не лише європейських країн, а й усього світу. Він ставить під загрозу те, що люди можуть самі вирішувати свою долю», – наголосив конгресмен.

На думку Торнберрі, конфлікт на Сході України є найбільшою загрозою світові з часів Другої світової війни. Після низки зустрічей конгресмени краще розуміють те, що відбувається на Сході України.

«Ми зустрілись із членами місії ОБСЄ, отримали нову інформацію щодо бойових дій. Ми також з'ясували, як ідуть поставки нової американської зброї на фронт. Крім того, ми поставили держпосадовцям низку запитань не лише з військової сфери», – зазначив конгресмен. Як зазначає прес-служба уряду, прем'єр-міністр обговорив із конгресменами також питання енергетичної безпеки та боротьби з корупцією. За словами голови американської делегації Торнберрі, Конгрес краще розумітиме, що планує український уряд, та якою може бути підтримка США у цьому напрямку.

Позиція президента США Барака Обами щодо постачання летальної зброї Україні залишається незмінною: американський лідер наголошує на необхідності дипломатичного, а не військового тиску на Росію.

На думку українського експерта, директора інформаційно-консалтингової компанії Defense Express Сергія Згурця, це відбувається через необхідність підтримки Путіна в інших напрямках міжнародної політики, зокрема, в питаннях Ірану, Ісламської держави та інших.

«Існують перетини певних інтересів, є якісь інші альянси, які, з точки зору Обами, примушують його пригальмовувати такі речі, як прямі поставки зброї до України в летальному компоненті», – наголосив Згурець.

Зустрічі американських законодавців із українськими лідерами відбулися в рамках їхніх поїздок до країн Східної Європи. Конгресмени вже побували в Румунії, після України їдуть до країн Балтії, а потім – до Польщі. До складу парламентської делегації, крім Вільяма Торнберрі, входять Кевін Маккарті, Майк Роджерс, Том Макартур, Стів Найт та Сет Мултон.

Конгресмен Вільям Торнберрі очолює комітет збройних сил нижньої палати Конгресу. На думку експертів, делегація приїхала вивчати військову ситуацію в Україні. Також експерти вважають, що українці мають довести, що дадуть собі раду з новою зброєю.

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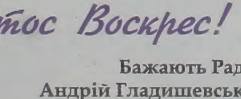

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Ukraine's new symbol of victory over Nazi Germany in World War II. The words say "NEVER AGAIN"

Rada bans Communist, Nazi propaganda

Adopts poppy as WWII remembrance symbol

(RFE/RL/UkrNews)—Ukraine's parliament voted April 9 to ban "propaganda of the totalitarian Communist and Nazi regimes," a major rebuke to the country's Soviet-era masters in Moscow and to Russia.

A total of 254 members of the 450-seat Verkhovna Rada voted in favor of the legislation in the former Soviet republic, which is deeply at odds with Russia over its annexation of Crimea and support for separatists in a conflict that has killed more than 6,000 people.

Under the legislation, the Communist government that ruled between 1917 and 1991 — the Soviet era — is condemned as a criminal regime that conducted policies of state terror.

Its symbols and propaganda are banned — a measure that, if implemented thoroughly, would require the demolition of monuments to Bolshevik Revolution leader Vladimir Lenin and other Soviet-era images that remain.

The legislation was initiated by the government and will become law when it is officially published, possibly on April 10.

It applies the same treatment to the Nazi regime, which occupied and controlled much of Ukraine during World War II before being driven out by Soviet forces.

Also on April 9, Ukrainian lawmakers adopted a law on the legal status and honoring the memory of participants to the struggle for Ukraine's independence in the 20th century, including groups like the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), that fought against Nazi Germany and Soviet authorities.

Another law adopted by the Ukrainian parliament April 9 allows public access to all documents classified by the Soviet-era authorities as secret.

The lawmakers also adopted another law on April 9, according to which, Ukraine will mark May 8 as the Day of Remembrance and Reconciliation for Those Who Lost Their Lives during World War II, in 1939-1945.

The law says that May 9 will be marked as Victory Day as usual but not in the Great Patriotic War as it is still being marked in Russia and many other former Soviet Republics but as the end of World War II.

On April 7, Ukraine's First Lady Maryna Poroshenko attended a "Remembrance Poppy" event as part of events marking the 70th anniversary of the Nazi surrender, a move many saw as another attempt to change symbolism of the victory in World War II.

"The time has come when we have to look for the ideas that unite our country and nation," she said, according to a statement on the presidential website.

Russian celebrations of the World War II victory as the product of unity among Soviet republics are ringing hollow to many in Ukraine because of Moscow's takeover of the Crimea and its support for separatists fighting Ukrainian government forces in a conflict that has killed more than 6,000 people since April last year.

The head of the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory, Volodymyr Vyatrovych, said that Soviet-era commemorations of the Allied victory had turned the "dreadful tragedy" of World War II into a celebration of the "triumph of communist ideas" and created a "cult of war."

"Last year, we saw that the myth about the Patriotic War, the Soviet War, had become not only an instrument of propaganda but also an instrument of war against Ukraine," he said, according to the website.

The laws adopted by the Ukrainian parliament on April 9 are seen as part of a shift away Soviet imagery Kyiv says the Kremlin is using to influence neighbors and promote self-serving myths about World War II amid the conflict in eastern Ukraine.

Polish president pledges support for Ukraine

(RFE/RL)—Polish President Bronislaw Komorowski voiced strong support for Ukraine in a speech in the neighboring country's parliament on April 9, urging Western nations to back Kyiv as it struggles against Russian interference.

Addressing the Verkhovna Rada in Kyiv, Komorowski said that Poland has "stretched out its hand to Ukraine and is doing everything — and will do everything — so that other states and peoples of the free Western world stretch their hands out to Ukraine as well."

"Poland's stretched hand is not just an indication of the current political trend but our understanding of the historic processes turning Ukraine into an equal and extremely important partner and neighbor," he said.

Without mentioning Russia by name, Komorowski pointed clearly at Moscow and stressed that the West must understand the importance of Ukraine's security.

"One cannot tolerate that the aggressor's soldiers, tanks, armored personnel carriers, and antiaircraft installations are present in Ukraine's east," he said, adding that "only the blind cannot see their lies today."

"The Western world has to realize that it can be safe only if Ukraine is safe," Komorowski said.

Kyiv and NATO say Russia has sent troops and weapons into Ukraine to support separatists whose conflict with government forces has killed more than 6,000 people since April 2014. Russia denies it.

The Polish president also said that European Union nations recognize Ukraine's territory in borders established by 1991, reiterating the EU's refusal to accept annexation of Ukraine's Crimea by Russia in March 2014.

Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko (right) raises aloft the hand of his Polish counterpart Bronislaw Komorowski during a session of the parliament in Kyiv on April 9.

"The changes of borders against the will of the Ukrainian nation will never be accepted by us and will always be condemned by us," Komorowski said.

Talking about the complicated history of ties between the Ukrainian and Polish peoples, Komorowski called on the two nations to choose "the path of forgiveness," saying that the issue of current Polish-Ukrainian ties "is not about the past, it is about the future."

"When Poles and Ukrainians stood against each other, somebody else, who wanted to deprive the two nations of their independence and freedom, always used that stand-off," Komorowski said.

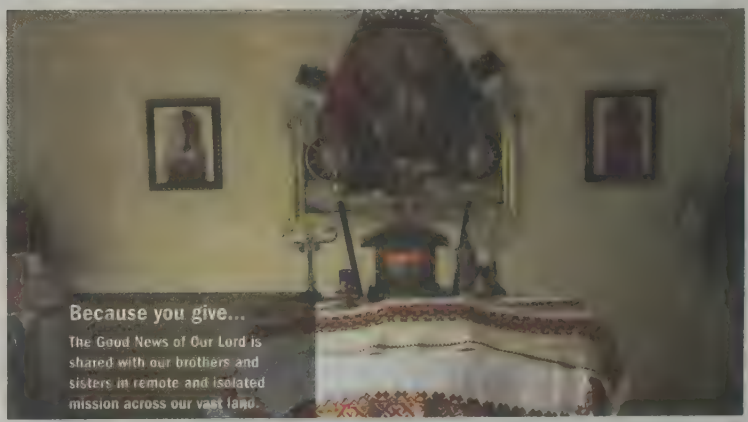
Komorowski added that Poland as an EU member will be supporting visa-free travel regulations for Ukrainian nationals.

Komorowski was on a two-day visit and met with President Petro Poroshenko on April 8.

On April 9, Komorowski and Poroshenko visited Bykivnya, an area on the outskirts of Kyiv where thousands of people, including Polish officers killed by Soviet authorities in March-April 1940, are buried.

Paying tribute to the victims of the Soviet regime, Komorowski said that "the commemoration of the victims of the past is one of the ways to prevent similar tragedies in future."

Poroshenko said that Bykivnya graves are "an echo of the black September of 1939 when Hitler and Stalin together ignited the bloody slaughter of the World War II, trying to share and break Europe."



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Ukrainian minister of agrarian policy and food visits Canada

(UCC National)—The Ukrainian Canadian Congress (UCC) welcomed the Minister of Agrarian Policy and Food of Ukraine, Oleksiy Pavlenko and Deputy Minister Vladyslava Rutytska during their official visit to Canada from March 26 to March 28, 2015.

On March 26, Minister Pavlenko met with Canada's Minister of International Trade, Ed Fast; Canada's Minister of Agriculture, Gerry Ritz, representatives of Export Development Canada and Taras Zalusky, Executive Director of the UCC, in Ottawa.

Ministers Fast and Pavlenko discussed the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement. "Canada continues to support the Ukrainian government and its people as they work to restore political and economic stability in the face of ongoing Russian aggression. We will continue our work towards concluding a Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement, which was announced during my last trade mission to Kyiv in January 2015. The agreement will create new market opportunities and will further strengthen the Canada-Ukraine partnership in peace and prosperity," Minister Fast said.

Minister Pavlenko, in an interview with the Globe and Mail, stated that he hoped the free trade agreement negotiations can be concluded by the end of the year. "From the Ukrainian side, we have a big will to move, and to sign, because it's not only political, I think it also has a very big economic effect. And it's not only positive for Ukrainian businesses but for Canadian businesses, as well," Minister Pavlenko stated.

Minister Pavlenko invited Minister Fast to the international exhibit AGRO-2015, taking place in Kyiv on June 3-5, 2015.

Ministers Pavlenko and Ritz discussed further cooperation between Ukraine and Canada in the agriculture sector. "Our two countries are actively engaged in negotiations toward concluding a free trade agreement which could benefit many sectors of both the Canadian and Ukrainian economies, most notably agriculture," said Minister Ritz.

"The agricultural sector is one of the most important areas of the economy for both Ukraine and Canada, and one in which there is large potential for future trade and cooperation," stated UCC Executive Director Taras Zalusky following his meeting with Minister Pavlenko. "It is a great pleasure to welcome Minister Pavlenko to Canada and we look forward to working closely with him and his team on expanding and intensifying trade and cooperation in this vital sector."

On March 27 Minister Pavlenko had meetings with Jeff Leal, Ontario Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, and Yvan Baker, (MPP, Etobicoke Centre).

Minister Pavlenko together with UCC National President Paul Grod met with Canada's Foreign Minister, Rob Nicholson in Mississauga. Canada announced the official signing of the disbursement of Canada's second $200 million low interest loan to Ukraine. The funds will be transferred to Ukraine by March 31. "We stand resolutely alongside the people of Ukraine as they courageously seek peace and freedom, and we stand with our allies in calling for Russia to stand by its Minsk commitments. The measures announced today will contribute to Ukraine's efforts to stabilize its economy, promote social stability and drive economic prosperity," Minister Nicholson stated.

On Friday evening, Minister Pavlenko participated in a business roundtable hosted by the Canada-Ukraine Chamber of Commerce (CUCC) and organized by John Iwaniura, CUCC's Vice President. Later the same evening the UCC Toronto branch hosted a community forum where Minister Pavlenko and Deputy Minister Rutytska addressed the broader Ukrainian Canadian community at the Golden Lion restaurant in Toronto.

On Saturday, March 28, Minister Pavlenko toured the Vineland Research and Innovation Centre and Creekside Estate Winery. "On behalf the Ukrainian Canadian community, I congratulate Minister Pavlenko and Canadian government officials on a very successful visit to Canada," stated Paul Grod, National President of the UCC. "The agriculture sector represents some 30% of the Ukrainian economy and it is crucial that Canada and Ukraine continue to explore areas for mutual cooperation and enhance commercial relations. What is most impressive is that Minister Pavlenko and Deputy Minister Rutytska represent the new generation of political leadership in Ukraine. Armed with business degrees these former chief executives have left the private sector to help rebuild Ukraine's economy and to rid it of the corruption that has plagued the country for the past two decades."

Minister Pavlenko at the Vineland Research and Innovation Centre

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Close to 1500 attend this year's Yarmarok

(UkrNews)—Close to 1500 people attended the Verkhovyna Song and Dance Ensemble's Yarmarok, held at the Ukrainian Youth Unity Complex in Edmonton, March 21-22.

This pre-Easter Bazaar is organized every two years and is a major fundraiser for the Ensemble, which consists of the Verkhovyna Choir and the Dunai Dancers.

"This year, Yarmarok was yet again a huge success. This event is organized entirely by current members within our Ensemble who volunteer their time," said Larysa Zawalak, Public Relations Co-ordinator for the Verkhovyna Ensemble.

Activities at Yarmarok include performances by dance groups and musicians, a presentation of Verkhovyna's Feature Film "The Dream", a craft fair and trade show, a penny carnival, petting zoo, bake sale and Baba's Kitchen.

Servus Credit Union also sponsored a colouring contest.

This year's performers included: Edmonton School of Ukrainian Dance, Steppe Band, Verkhovyna School of Ukrainian Dance, Holy Cross Zorianka Ukrainian Dance; Volya School of Dance, Ardrossan Yatran Ukrainian Dance, Smoky Lake Holubka Dancers, Alicia & Stephen Slusarchuk (Tsymbaly), Cheremosh School of Ukrainian Dance, Parkland Ukrainian Dance and St. Andrew's Veerneest Ukrainian Dance.

Exhibitors included: Cobblestone Freeway, Tours and Giftshop; Donna Shaw and Janet Toumey, Jewelery, Purses, Fabric Crafts, Easter Items, Tablecloths & Dishcloths; Edmonton Catholic Schools, Ukrainian Bilingual Parent Advisory Society; Eric Brown, Self Published Author; Kathy Kesler, South Hill Designs; Kim Pritchard. Jam Berries & Makeup; Kristen Girouard, South Hill Designs; Laryssa Talanchuk, Paw Wiper Mitt, Catnip Rats, Pressed Flower Cards; Larysa Luciw & Jerry Cordeiro, Photography Prints & Homemade Art Hearts; Lindsay Neeves, Barefoot Books: Childrens Books & Activities for ages 0-12; Namisha Hlus, DoTerra Essential Oils, Paper flower arrangements; Olena Dudych, Items from Ukraine: Pysanky, Easter basket napkins, Embroidered Tablecloths, Ukrainian Costumes & Clothing; Ruth Russell,Knitted & Crocheted Items, Tutus & Jewelery; Sandra's Old World Charm, Ukrainian Blouse, Shirts & Dresses, Embroidered tablecloths & Linens, Ukrainian Gift wear, Easter Eggs & dyes, Easter Napkins, Beaded Necklaces & more; Shawn, Toni & Val Boyko, Ukrainian Cultural Paintings, Ukrainian Handcrafted Metalwork, Wraparound & Reversable Headbands; Sherry Bereziuk, Ukrainian Embroidered Shirts & Items and Shirley Marchuk, Ukrainian Easter Eggs & Basket Covers.

PHOTOS – MARCO LEVYTSKY

Counter-clockwise from top right: The Petting Zoo is always a popular attraction; Easter arts and crafts display; Nannie with her kids; St. Andrew's Veerneest Ukrainian Dance.

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(Радіо Свобода)—МВС відкрило кримінальне провадження за фактом зловживання службовим становищем та розкраданням бюджетних коштів з боку посадових осіб групи підприємств Дмитра Фірташа OSTCHEM. Про це повідомив глава МВС Арсен Аваков.

«Дії посадових осіб підприємств «Азот», «Рінеазот», «Концерн Стирол», «Сєвєродонецького об'єднання «Азот» розцінюються як дії, що призвели до розкрадання у держави коштів на суму понад 2,3 мільярда гривень», – написав він на своїй сторінці в Facebook.

Справу відкрито за статтею 191 Кримінального кодексу (привласнення, розтрата майна або заволодіння ним шляхом зловживання службовим становищем), частина 5 (особливо великі розміри).

За словами Авакова, напрацьовані матеріали передають для процесуального керівництва і визначення підслідності в Генпрокуратуру.

У групі OSTCHEM наразі цю інформацію не коментують.

Раніше повідомлялось, що Генеральна прокуратура і Служба безпеки України не розпочинали ніяких кримінальних проваджень щодо олігарха, спонсора Партії регіонів Дмитра Фірташа. Про це стало відомо з відповідей від ГПУ й СБУ на запити журналістів програми «Схеми», спільного телепроекту Радіо Свобода і Першого Національного.

Папа Франциск зустрівся у Ватикані з українцями, 18 лютого 2015 року

Чи реальний приїзд папи Римського в Україну?

Галина Терещук, *Радіо Свобода.*

Єпископи Українсько-греко-католицької і Римо-католицької церков під час останньої поїздки у Ватикан вкотре запросили понтифіка приїхати в Україну. Про це повідомив архієпископ Львівський РКЦ Мечислав Мокшицький. Також Святіший Отець отримав офіційне запрошення від президента Петра Порошенка.

Понтифік ще не відповів на запрошення духовенства і українського президента, але папа Франциск відомий своєю непередбачуваністю. Великою мірою приїзд понтифіка залежить від президента України, наголосив львівський архієпископ Мечислав Мокшицький. Митрополит здивований, що досі Петро Порошенко не відвідав папу Франциска.

«Нам трішки прикро як мирянам і католикам, що наш президент не приїхав до папи з візитом. Зазвичай новий президент відвідує Італію і папу Римського. У цій ситуації такий офіційний візит українського президента був би дуже потрібний для справи України», – каже митрополит Мечислав Мокшицький і припускає, що такий візит дав би більше шансів щодо приїзду папи в Україну.

Митрополит Мечислав Мокшицький був секретарем Івана Павла II протягом останніх дев'яти років життя понтифіка. Відтак достеменно знає, як організовуються паломництва папи. Святіший отець може приїхати до своїх вірних, а також і як глава Ватикану на запрошення президента держави. До того ж має бути певна вагома причина для візиту, а це особлива подія в житті УГКЦ чи РКЦ, або ж у житті країни. Своє запрошення владики аргументували ситуацією в Україні. Римо-католицька церва просить папу приїхати і разом з громадянами України помолитись за мир і стабільність в державі.

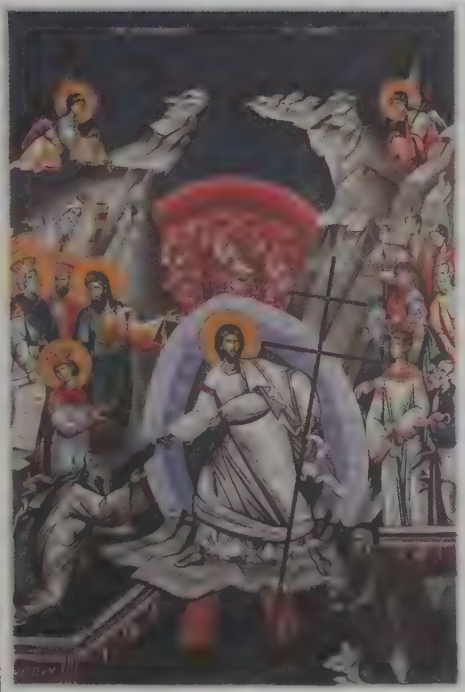
«Коли була складна ситуація в Боснії-Герцеговині, то щоб додати моральну підтримку після війни людям, папа Іван Павло II швидко поїхав у Сараєво. Ми думаємо, що приїзд папи в Україну важливий, щоб молитись за мир і щоб заохочувати інші держави, інші церкви до такої солідарності. Як це буде швидко, ми цього не знаємо, папа Франциск робить такі несподіванки», – зазначив митрополит.

Зазвичай візит понтифіка готується упродовж півроку. Папа Франциск найбільше цікавився у єпископів ситуацією в Україні. Владики розповіли, зокрема, про те, що до українських бійців у полоні застосовують тортури.

«Ми йому у деталях говорили, коли сказали про тортури, то папа був здивований, бо про це не чув і було йому дуже прикро. Папа запевнив, що далі молитиметься, говоритиме з міністром закордонних справ, щоб все робити, щоб війни не було».

Якщо понтифік відвідає Україну, то приїде і у Львів, де проживає найбільша кількість католиків у державі.

Ще навіть на початку 2001 року чимало скептиків не вірили у візит папи Івана Павла II в Україну, а у червні його вітали мільйони людей у Києві та Львові. Тоді святіший отець проголосив новомучениками тридцять представників УГКЦ і РКЦ. Греко-католики очікують від папи Франциска проголошення блаженним митрополита Андрея Шептицького.



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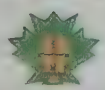

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The March 28 rally was also aimed at easing concerns that Ukraine is at risk of unraveling into privately ruled fiefdoms.

'Unity rally' in Dnipropetrovsk aims to mend ex-governor's rift with Kyiv

(RFE/RL)--Residents of the Ukrainian city of Dnipropetrovsk have held what they called a "unity rally" meant to help mend a rift between President Petro Poroshenko and the regional governor he recently fired.

The March 28 rally was also aimed at easing concerns that Ukraine is at risk of unraveling into privately ruled fiefdoms.

On March 25, Poroshenko dismissed the powerful tycoon Ihor Kolomoyskiy as governor of Dnipropetrovsk, a region near separatist-held territory in the southeast.

Kolomoyskiy's dismissal followed a public dispute over control of state oil companies and accusations that he used private armed forces to protect and promote his interests.

Kolomoyskiy had been one of the government's allies, and his militias helped stop Russian-backed separatists from moving beyond the eastern regions of Donetsk and Luhansk.

But an uneasy alliance with Poroshenko appeared to disintegrate in recent weeks as Kolomoyskiy clashed with the government over control of two state-owned energy companies, Ukrnafta and Ukrtransnafta.

In Dnipropetrovsk, Kolomoyskiy's departure leaves no one indifferent

By Yulia Ratsybarska and Daisy Sindelar

(RFE/RL)—Ukrainians have had plenty of practice watching politicians come and go.

Most abrupt exits prompt little more than a shrug of the shoulders. But the departure of billionaire Ihor Kolomoyskiy, the governor of Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, has stirred strong emotions on his home turf.

Some are passionately supportive of Kolomoyskiy.

"Never mind that he was an oligarch," said Svitlana, a resident of the regional capital. "He protected our region from the military threat. Now I feel really worried."

And others are not.

"They're cleaning up the country, and our president is insisting that everyone play by the same rules," said Yaroslav, another Dnipropetrovsk resident. "Regular citizens and oligarchs alike."

Kolomoyskiy, who took up the governor's post a year ago, resigned under pressure on March 24 after using private gunmen to occupy two state-controlled oil companies where his influence was waning.

The move was seen by some as a victory for Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko, who has sought to rein in the influence of Ukraine's often-thuggish oligarchs in the pursuit of rule of law.

Many others, however, see a risk. Dnipropetrovsk, a key industrial region, lies directly west of Ukraine's war-torn Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts.

Kolomoyskiy, 52, has contributed funding to the Ukrainian army and formed paramilitary units to prevent violence from spilling over into his region. Moreover, he is widely seen as spearheading successful efforts in the oblast to organize volunteers, aid, and medical staff to support Ukrainian troops and civilians in the war zone.

For now, Kolomoyskiy's team has signaled that security remains a priority. Deputy Governor Svyatoslav Oliynyk, who is departing together with Kolomoyskiy, said the transfer to new regional leadership should not adversely affect the region's stability.

"We'll do everything in our power to pursue that goal," said Oliynyk. "Until we're convinced that the new authorities have the situation under control, we'll stay involved in regional security issues."

Oliynyk also hinted that Kolomoyskiy's political career was far from over, suggesting his Dnipropetrovsk team would soon re-emerge as an unspecified "political entity."

Vladyslav Romanov, a regional lawmaker, says Kolomoyskiy's resignation will prompt a welcome "shakeup" in Ukrainian politics but isn't likely to taint the oligarch himself.

"Kolomoyskiy will probably continue his political activities, not as a public servant but as a businessman and a citizen," says Romanov, a member of the Poroshenko Bloc. "He's very popular right now, in terms of public faith and support. So the question is, how's he going to use this popularity?"

If the behavior of his aides is any indication, he may use it to wage an open campaign against his opponents in Kyiv — including Poroshenko.

Oliynyk noted crisply that by forcing Kolomoyskiy's resignation, the Ukrainian president — who, after all, is an oligarch himself — had "set the bar very high regarding businessmen in office," and that such standards should be applied equally to "everyone, beginning with the businessmen in the presidential administration, the cabinet, and the president himself."

A second outgoing deputy governor, Hennadiy Korban, added, "Thieves are sitting in Kyiv today, and it's time for these thieves to go."

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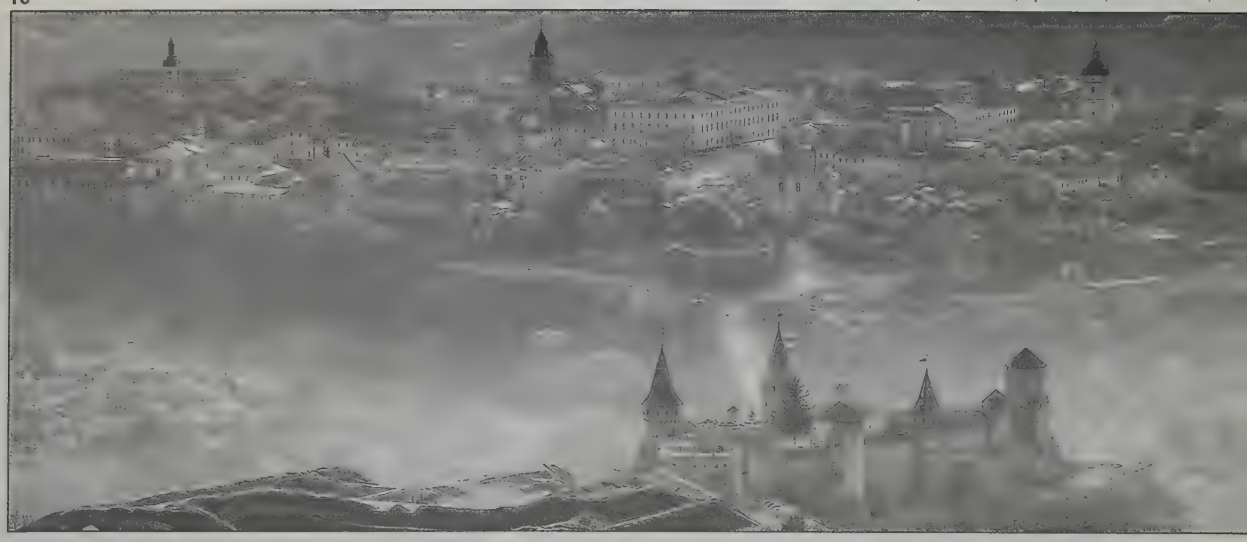

Soros ready to invest $1 bln in Ukraine

(RFE/RL)—Billionaire financier George Soros says he is prepared to invest $1 billion in Ukraine if Western countries help support private investment there.

In an interview published by Austrian newspaper Der Standard on March 30, Soros said, "I stand ready."

He said there were "concrete investment ideas, for example in agriculture and infrastructure projects."

Soros said the West could help make Ukraine more attractive to investors by protecting them against political risks — possibly by providing financing "at EU interest rates — very close to zero."

Ukraine is seeking cash and investment as it struggles with a Russian-backed rebellion in the east that has exacerbated its economic problems.

Chinese company CITIC Construction said on March 26 it would provide Ukraine with $15 billion in low-rate loans over 15 years to help support construction of affordable housing.

The International Monetary Fund approved a $17.5 billion bailout for Ukraine earlier this month.

Gazprom chief confirms new deal with Ukraine

(RFE/RL)—The head of Russian gas giant Gazprom has confirmed the signing of an agreement on gas supplies to Ukraine for the next three months.

Gazprom CEO Aleksei Miller said Kyiv will pay $247.18 per 1,000 cubic meters of gas in the second quarter under the deal with Ukrainian state energy company Naftogaz.

The agreement extends an EU-brokered "winter package" that was signed in October and expired on March 31.

Miller said Gazprom would not insist on a "take-or-pay" arrangement requiring Ukraine to pay for gas regardless of whether it uses it. He called that clause a "stumbling block" to negotiations.

Ukraine still must pay in advance for Russian gas supplies.

The "winter package" led to the resumption of deliveries to Ukraine months after Gazprom turned off the taps in a price and debt dispute that was exacerbated by a series of geopolitical events: the ouster of Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych in February 2014; Moscow's takeover of Crimea in March; and Russia's support for armed separatists who have seized parts of eastern Ukraine.

The dispute raised fears of reduced deliveries to the European Union, which gets about 40 percent of the gas it imports from Russia via pipelines crossing Ukraine. Gazprom supplies about half the gas used in the EU.

In a statement posted on his ministry's website earlier on April 2, Ukrainian Energy Minister Volodymyr Demchyshyn called the agreement a "victory" for an economic rather than a political approach to relations between Naftogaz and Gazprom.

Successive Ukrainian governments have said a 10-year gas agreement signed in 2009 locked Kyiv into prices far above market levels, and Kremlin critics say Moscow has used the deal as a lever of pressure on Ukraine and the EU.

Yanukovych, in favor with Russian President Vladimir Putin after he spurned a landmark pact to bring Ukraine closer to the EU in November 2013, reached a deal with Moscow in December to purchase gas for $285 per 1,000 cubic meters.

But after Yanukovych was pushed from power by protests touched off by his turn away from Europe, Russia demanded $485 as well as full payment of Ukraine's multibillion-dollar gas debt.

Russia stopped supplying gas to Ukraine in June, citing debt and a lack of advance payments, as the conflict in eastern Ukraine escalated.

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Kamianets Podilsky

What about traveling to Ukraine?

By Vincent Rees

Many people are asking themselves if travel to Ukraine is a good idea considering the conflict in the far east of the country. Without minimizing the suffering that has affected many, my personal experience is that western Ukraine is very safe.

I spent quite a bit of time there during the revolution and was there throughout this past summer. My wife and I were married in the Carpathian Mountains and family and friends came from Canada to celebrate with us and we all had a wonderful time.

Besides that, I went to work every day, met friends and colleagues for lunch, went to the market and bought fresh cheese and bread on my way home and watched the news like everyone else around the world. Our Cobblestone Freeway office continues to operate in Lviv and we speak with our staff and families there every day. People still go to work, take their kids to school, work in the garden and go about their daily lives.

You may be surprised to know that tourism in western Ukraine was up last summer almost 30% due to the large amounts of people visiting Lviv rather than Crimea as they might have. Lviv continues to be a fairy tale city and the city centre is a UNESCO world heritage site with a European flavour similar to that of Prague and Krakow. The café's are open and the streets are full of people from all over the world.

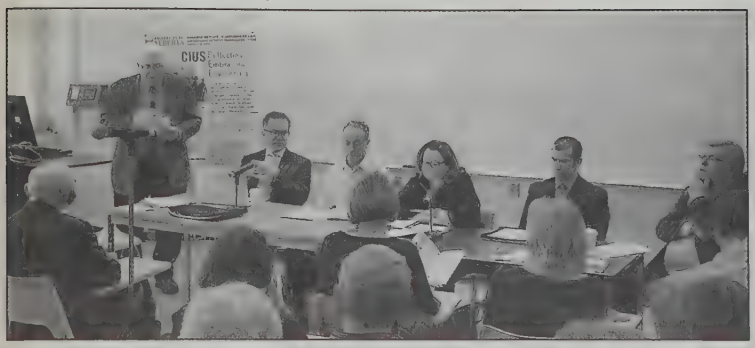
Remember that tourism supports the local economies as well. On Dec. 8th, Lonely Planet published an article entitled, "Five reasons to visit Lviv, the safe and affordable gem of western Ukraine". Also, the villages of western Ukraine, the craft bazaars and the lovely Carpathian mountains are as welcoming and hospitable as ever and your tourist dollar goes a long way to help Ukraine rebuild its economy.

According to the Canadian government, there is no travel advisory in effect for Ukraine and we have had travellers going to Ukraine throughout the year to visit family on private custom tours and general tours as well.

I can't tell anyone to travel to Ukraine, but if you decide to go, I'll be there and we will have a wonderful time together!

Vincent Rees is the owner of Cobblestone Freeway Tours

Vincent Rees



Round table session.

CIUS holds a symposium on the anniversary of the Euromaidan revolution

(CIUS)—On March 9–11, the Centre for Political and Regional Studies (CPRS) at the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta, held a symposium on the first anniversary of the Euromaidan Revolution in Ukraine. At the symposium, scholars and experts from Canada and Ukraine spoke about the significance and consequences of this historic event and its influence on current international developments.

The symposium was opened by Dr. Bohdan Harasymiw, acting coordinator of the CPRS. The first panel was devoted to the images, symbols, and identity of the Euromaidan Revolution. In her presentation, "Media Representations and Their Impact," Marta Dyczok (Western University, London, Ontario) spoke about competing narratives in media representations of the events in Ukraine. She argued that information was used as a weapon, and thus the conditions of reporting have worked against the goal of providing accurate coverage. As a result, owing in part to the lack of expertise on Ukraine among Western journalists, international public opinion remains divided over the causes and consequences of events, the character of the Maidan protests, Putin's sending Russian troops into Crimea, and the nature of the military conflict in eastern areas of Ukraine.

Speaking about the "Influence of the Maidan and the War on National Identity," Volodymyr Kulyk (Institute of Political and Ethnic Studies, Kyiv) noted a dramatic change in Ukrainian national identity attributable to the Euromaidan protests, democratic transformations, the current war in the Donbas, and Russian aggression. Based on a nationwide representative survey and focus group discussions, his research has produced important data showing increased self-identification with Ukraine, greater pride in belonging to the Ukrainian nation, stronger attachment to symbols of nationhood and statehood (flag, anthem, and titular language), greater consolidation of the Ukrainian nation, enhanced solidarity with other members of the nation, increased readiness to defend and work for Ukraine, and increased confidence in the people's power to change Ukraine for the better and make it a truly European country.

In his presentation, "Russia versus Ukraine: Conflicting Historical Memory as Part of the Military-Political Conflict," Vladyslav Hrynevych (Institute of Political and Ethnic Studies, Kyiv) looked into the conflict of competing historical memories as a significant factor in fostering antagonistic relationships between Russia, as an imperial centre, and other post-Soviet republics, whose "new future requires a new past." The speaker pointed out that deep transformations have been taking place in the Russian Federation's memory politics, which emphasize militarism, imperialism, anti-Westernism, and opposition to democracy and individual rights in favour of the imperatives of the collective. These principles run counter to Ukraine's aspirations, based on Europe's declared values of the rule of law, social justice, and personal freedom.

On the second day, a round table on "Maidan 2004 versus Euromaidan 2014: Assessing Influence and Continuity" was held with the participation of David Marples (Department of History & Classics, U of A), Robert Murray (Frontier Centre for Public Policy, U of A), Larissa Blavatska (retired diplomat, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade), Lubomyr Markevych (project manager for the European Commission, formerly for the United Nations Office of Project Services), and Michael Bociurkiw (OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine). In his presentation, Marples compared and contrasted the Orange Revolution with the Euromaidan Revolution. Murray focused on the international impact of the Euromaidan Revolution and the special war that Russia has been waging against Ukraine, concluding that the response of the West, particularly that of the United States, has been weak. Larissa Blavatska was stationed at Canada's Embassy in Ukraine from 2009 to 2011. Her presentation focused on the failures of Ukraine's Orange leadership, particularly of Viktor Yushchenko, which allowed Yanukovych to come to power. Markevych, who recently returned from Ukraine after living there since the mid-1990s, focused his talk on the role of students and churches and the transition of Maidan self-defence units to combatants now fighting in eastern Ukraine. Bociurkiw has worked as a journalist in North America and Asia, and is today a spokesperson for the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine. He spoke on the mandate of the OSCE in eastern Ukraine, where unfettered, safe access is needed for effective monitoring of the situation. He also emphasized the humanitarian disaster and dire situation of the civilian population in the Donbas region as a result of the war, especially in regions under the control of the DPR and LPR.

On the final day, the focus was on interpretations or reinterpretations of the Euromaidan Revolution. Speaking about "Maidan: Origins, Meaning and Other Questions," Bohdan Kordan (St. Thomas More College, University of Saskatchewan) explored the origins, meaning and significance of the Euromaidan, highlighting the deep-seated changes in political and social consciousness that have occurred across the broad spectrum of Ukrainian society. Building on the notion that the Maidan is an expression of civic engagement (in the tradition of the 1989 civic movements in Eastern Europe), which places the individual at the heart of the new political project in Ukraine, Kordan examined and assessed the meaning and role of the Maidan with respect to the current conflict and the challenges that lie ahead.

Taras Kuzio (CIUS), speaking from the United Kingdom via Skype connection, addressed the issue of "Violence, Criminality and Russian and Eurasian Nationalism," a topic overlooked by many experts. He pointed to these as factors in sustaining Yanukovych's criminal regime. Kuzio argued that Yanukovych and his Party of Regions have represented, by far, the most aggressive, anti-democratic, and corrupt political force in Ukraine, whose team stole about $100 billion during Yanukovych's presidency. In his opinion, not Ukrainian nationalism but neo-Soviet and Russian nationalism has been and remains the biggest threat to Ukraine's democratic system and to European integration.

Mychailo Wynnyckyj (Kyiv-Mohyla Academy National University) considered the Euromaidan Revolution in Ukraine as a "great" revolution, comparable in effect to the American, French, and Russian revolutions. Unraveling the complexity of Ukraine's Maidan, the speaker characterized the Euromaidan events as a triple revolution— national, bourgeois, and postmodern — in which a moment of historical completion (correction), a moment of political birth (transition), and an idealist nascense of novel senses (dignity, natural justice, organic solidarity) were reflected.

The symposium was well attended, and lively discussions were held at all three sessions. One of the highlights was the Shevchenko Lecture, delivered by the world-renowned Ukrainian writer Andriy Kurkov, who spoke on the evening of 9 March on "How Many Maidans Does Ukraine Need to Become Different?" The symposium was supported by donations from the Alberta Society for the Advancement of Ukrainian Studies, the Alberta Ukrainian Commemorative Society, the Department of Modern Languages and Cultural Studies at the U of A, the League of Ukrainian Canadians, the Ukrainian Senior Citizens' Club of Marko Boyeslav, the Ukrainian Women's Association of Canada (Olha Basarab Edmonton branch), and Nick Sadiwnyk (Calgary).

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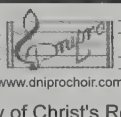

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У Львові встановлять пам'ятник Андрею Шептицькому

Галина Терещук, *Радіо Свобода*

Минулого місяця у Львові проходив тиждень під іменем митрополита Андрея Шептицького. Різні середовища львів'ян обговорювали проект пам'ятника цій визначній духовній особі. І вирішили – постамент у Львові буде і бажано цього року, але це має бути один із найкращих пам'ятників у місті, «живою» площею для спілкування. Адже внесок митрополита у Львів неоціненний.

Історія зі встановленням пам'ятника митрополиту Андрею Шептицькому у Львові триває понад 20 років. Ще на початку 90-х міські депутати вирішили, що у Львові встановлять постаменти Тарасові Шевченку, Михайлові Грушевському і Андрею Шептицькому. Першим двом видатним українцям пам'ятники давно стоять. І жоден із проектів не викликав такої бурхливої реакції, як ситуація із пам'ятником Андрею Шептицькому.

Рік тому створили оргкомітет зі встановлення пам'ятника, у грудні міськвиконком затвердив проект. З бюджету розвитку міста запланували виділити понад 30 мільйонів гривень на реконструкцію площі перед Святоюрським собором. А церква з пожертв вірних фінансуватиме виготовлення самого постаменту за проектом скульптора Андрія Коверка (1893-1967).

Дорогу біля собору мали б перенести. Саме це рішення і необхідність вирізати кілька дерев спричинили шквал обговорень у соціальних мережах. Дописувачі об'єднались у групу «Врятуй сквер». Її представник Остап Походжай наголосив у коментарі Радіо Свобода, що їхня група відстоює гідне вшанування 150-річчя митрополита Андрея Шептицького і не виступає проти встановлення пам'ятника. Найбільше активісти побоюються, щоб площа не була залита бетоном і не відштовхувала городян. Активісти відстоюють позицію щодо створення «живого» простору біля Святоюрського собору, де б львів'яни могли відпочивати і спілкуватись, об'єднувались довкола імені Шептицького.

«Для чого переносити дорогу, для чого потрібна реконструкція площі. Я за пам'ятник. Я дуже поважаю Шептицького, його постать мене просто захоплює, все те, що він робив для нас, вражає. Просто не потрібно це переводити у громіздке будівництво. 29 липня, у день народження митрополита, люди стоятимуть у гравії. Можна встановити пам'ятник у сквері чи митрополичих садах», – каже активіст.

Упродовж семи годин представники різних середовищ львів'ян під час круглого столу висловлювали власну думку щодо пам'ятника.

«Ми повинні розуміти, що ми всі справді хочемо покращення життя у цьому місті. Таку розмову слід було починати набагато раніше. Чому не почали цього? Бо ніхто у місті не помітив, що виросло нове покоління людей, які хочуть, щоб цей пам'ятник оцінювали ті, які будуть жити після нас. Ми його будуємо не для себе, а для тих, хто по ньому буде оцінювати нас», – зауважив екскурсовод Ігор Лильо.

Напруження ситуації довкола імені митрополита Шептицького дуже вигідне Кремлю, щоб протиставити і збурити львівську громаду, а тому лише за круглим столом варто шукати порозуміння, вважає координатор бойкотного руху, волонтер Олег Радик, який нещодавно повернувся із зони бойових дій. До слова, російські медіа скористались цієї ситуацією і повідомили, що львів'яни відмовились від пам'ятника Шептицькому, мовляв, не цінять митрополита. Тому, наголосив Олег Радик, львівським активістам потрібно було відстоювати позицію щодо постаменту рік тому, ще до ухвалення проекту пам'ятника, а не спричиняти галас.

«Провина за цю ситуацію лежить на громаді, яка раніше не втручалась у ситуацію, і на церкві, яка належно людям не пояснила концепцію пам'ятника. Це наше місто, і якщо є різні думки, то все одно має закінчитись добрим миром. Пам'ятник буде все-таки, можливо його треба зробити іншим, можливо перенести, треба сквер облагородити. З тієї дурної ситуації, в яку ми втяглись, треба вийти гідно, і пам'ятник має бути. А те, що кажуть про 32 мільйони гривень, вони не врятують армію. Міський голова усунувся у критичній ситуації, бо боїться стати на чийсь бік, щоб не втратити електорат. Не треба ставати на якийсь бік, треба сісти за стіл переговорів і зняти напругу. На жаль, мер цього не зробив. Чим більше будемо ситуацію напружувати, тим буде гірше», – говорить громадський активіст.

Міський голова Львова Андрій Садовий постійно говорить про те, що підтримує спорудження пам'ятника. За його словами, доречними є відкриті громадські обговорення реалізації проекту, про це він написав на своїй сторінці у Facebook.

На сьогодні всі сторони семигодинної дискусії погодились, що пам'ятник митрополитові має бути у Львові. І найкраще було б його встановити цього року. Адже для громади важливо гідно вшанувати постать і спадщину митрополита Андрея Шептицького. Створено робочу групу з 12 осіб із різних сторін і через два тижні вона має оприлюднити спільне бачення Святоюрської площі. Наприкінці квітня громаді запропонують остаточний варіант із пам'ятником митрополиту і простором довкола нього.

В Україні «виховали» миротворців

Ірина Шевченко , Радіо Свобода

Проект «Українська миротворча школа», реалізований коаліцією громадських і урядових організацій України та Польщі, досяг першого випуску. 30 березня в Києві 66 випускників із різних міст України отримали свої дипломи миротворців.

У світі миротворчі школи існують вже давно. Вони навчають ліквідовувати конфлікти та бути до них готовими. Для України миротворча школа – це нова практика. Проект стартував у вересні минулого року. Протягом п'яти місяців учасники проходили різноманітні тренінги та семінари, присвячені вирішенню конфліктів у конкретних регіонах України. Об'єктом роботи стала Волинь, Херсонська, Вінницька, Одеська області, підконтрольні Україні території Донеччини та Луганщини.

«Ми брали на себе зобов'язання розробити стратегію трансформації і попередження конфліктів у прикордонних областях України. Але проект розвинувся в те, що ми назвали «Українською миротворчою школою», у велику снігову кулю просвітницьких заходів, шкіл, навчань, дискусій», – розповідає голова правління Інформаційного центру «Майдан Моніторинг» та координатор проекту Наталія Зубар.

Окрім того, в рамках проекту було проведено соціологічне дослідження настроїв мешканців зони конфлікту. За його результатами, більше ніж 60 відсотків опитаних на підконтрольній Україні території Донбасу вважають себе патріотами. Доктор соціологічних наук, професор Ігор Рущенко повідомляє, що в межах колективної свідомості громадян цього регіону відбулись суттєві зміни.

«Очевидно, соціальний простір Донбасу розірваний і, можливо, назавжди. Це вже різні ментальні, культурні зони. І оця зона Донбасу, де проводилось дослідження, там відбувся певний злам у політичних настроях, ідентичності, світогляді, тобто в межах колективної свідомості громадян. Цей злам відбувся у проукраїнському напрямку, і це дуже цікаво», – зазначає Рущенко

Як показало опитування, у населення також дуже критичне ставлення до місцевої влади. Сьогодні лідером довіри є волонтери.

«Це дослідження перевернуло мій погляд. Хоча би на ту частину Донбасу, яка зараз підконтрольна Україні», – зауважує професор Ігор Рущенко.

За словами Наталії Зубар, головна мета Української миротворчої школи – якісне зміцнення тилу, як запорука національної безпеки. Перші випускники отримали навички організовувати діалог всередині громад для тих, хто між собою не розмовляє: влада, військові, цивільне населення.

«Вони можуть організувати громадський діалог, вони можуть організувати дискусію, зібрати людей і вислухати їхні потреби, навчились працювати з людьми», – наголошує голова правління Інформаційного центру «Майдан Моніторинг».

Putin winning war against Ukraine, Harasymiw says

(UkrNews)—Russian President Vladimir Putin is winning the undeclared war against Ukraine because the actions taken by the West in response to his aggression are not enough to deter him, says an Edmonton-based political scientist.

"It seems clear to me that the means used hitherto — diplomacy, sanctions, plus the Minsk I and Minsk II ceasefires — are not capable of deterring Putin because the war he is waging is broader and different than skirmishes on the ground in a portion of the Donbas in Ukraine," said Dr. Bohdan Harasymiw, Professor Emeritus of Political Science at the University of Calgary, and Acting Coordinator, Centre for Political and Regional Studies at the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies at the University of Alberta, at a CIUS-sponsored seminar, April 1.

"Furthermore, neither the United Nations nor the United States, the world's remaining superpower, are able to stop his aggression. Sadly, but with incomparably worse consequences for all concerned, somewhat like the British Empire was said to have been acquired in a fit of absent-mindedness, so today Vladimir Putin is proceeding to reassemble the Russian Empire through an episode of misapprehension," he added.

During his presentation, Dr. Harasymiw examined arguments from both the optimistic side, which says Putin is losing the war, and the pessimistic side, which says he is winning, concluding that the pessimists have the stronger case.

In summarizing the arguments on the optimistic side (optimistic for the West, pessimistic for the Kremlin) Dr. Harasymiw stated the belief is that Putin can be restrained in prolonging and accelerating the war against Ukraine by:

• The impact of economic sanctions on Russia as a whole, as well as by the threat of further sanctions;

• Domestic pressures, at both the grass roots and elite levels, from a Russian society adversely affected by the economic sanctions against Russia; and

• Perhaps arming Ukraine, but this is controversial.

However, he noted, none of the following entities (not to mention the combined armed forces of Ukraine — including the Army proper, the National Guard, and the Security Service of Ukraine [SBU]) have been invoked as capable of halting further aggression by Putin:

• The European Union collectively or individual member-states such as the United Kingdom, France, or Germany;

• The Organization for Security and Cooperation In Europe (OSCE);

• NATO;

•. The United Nations;

• The United States, by direct diplomatic or military intervention; and

• Canada.

"The idea that Putin's aggressive actions in Ukraine can be largely curbed by Western sanctions, by means of their direct and indirect effects, is simply wishful thinking. It is based on a massive misapprehension of Putin's thinking, of his strategy, of his relationship to the Russian people, and of Russian war-making philosophy," he stated.

It is clear that Putin scorns Western rhetoric and hypocritical behaviour, Dr. Harasymiw continued quoting Ukrainian political scientist and NAUKMA professor Hryhorii Perepelytsia, who stated bluntly:

"Putin has already become accustomed to such rhetoric and is convinced that no behind it there is nothing that threatens Russia. And the more they make remarks, the less impression they are going to make on Vladimir Putin and on Russia as such. Russian society is in fact laughing at these threats and at the instituted sanctions because the Russians feel no negative influence from them."

Another commentator, Ben Judah, pointed out from the outset that Europe is more interested in doing business with Russia, and in laundering illicit Russian money, than sanctioning it.

"Once Russia's powerful listened when European embassies issued statements denouncing the baroque corruption of Russian state companies. But no more. Because they know full well it is European bankers, businessmen and lawyers who do the dirty work for them placing the proceeds of corruption in hideouts from the Dutch Antilles to the British Virgin Islands," he said.

Dr. Harasymiw also noted that a full catalogue of the fateful discrepancies between Russian and Western strategic thinking has been offered by Lilia Shevtsova, who proposes that in dealing with Russia, the West needs to disabuse itself of mythical beliefs, in particular:

• That Putin is the problem when it's the system of personalized power;

• That Russia's "humiliation" can ever be alleviated;

• That Russia's war with Ukraine is about territory and can be accommodated, when really it's driven by internal economic weakness and serves as a compensation for that;

• That the Russian elite are rational actors, whereas they are not — they are risk-takers who respect force, not rules;

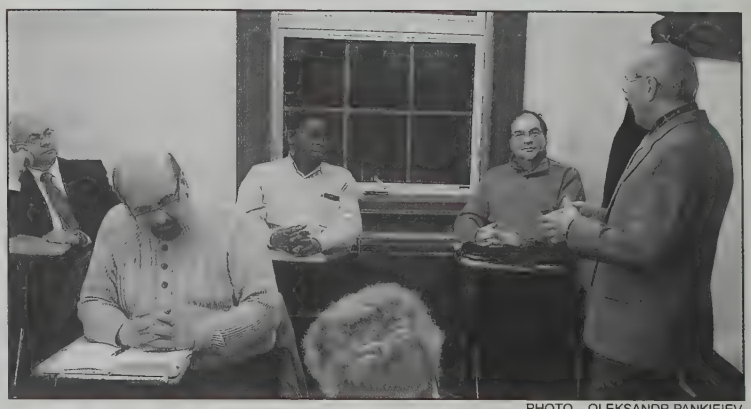

PHOTO – OLEKSANDR PANKIEIEV

Dr. Harasymiw speaks to the audience

• That geopolitics dictates an inevitable conflict between Russia and the West for which the West is to blame.

• That the conflict in Ukraine is not a war; and

• That there is not military solution to the conflict—except that Russia is using this very means to secure its objectives.

"Ultimately, therefore, the 'Ukraine crisis' is not really about Ukraine at all, but, in the Kremlin's view a response to and overturning of the post-Cold War order dictated to Russia by the United States. It means readjusting the world order in such a way as to give Russia a more dignified role in the world. The problem is that the Kremlin will never find any Western concession regarding this order satisfactory, because the basis of its survival is the reproduction on the Weimar Syndrome, which depends on a constant demand for 'deliverables' (the delivery of which must of course be in some way unsatisfactory — in order to maintain the 'besieged fortress'). Ukraine, unfortunately, has become a way for the Kremlin to sustain this process and thus reproduce itself," he said.

Dr. Harasymiw also noted that some optimists have evolved their thinking, citing the example of former journalist, now Liberal MP for Toronto-Centre, Chrystia Freeland who in a March 2014 article in the New York Times argued that "Putin and his vision of an authoritarian, Russian-dominated former Soviet space have already lost. Democratic, independent Ukraine, and the messy, querulous (but also free and law-abiding) 'European' idea have won."

In August 2014, her article in Politico magazine, "Ukraine Is Winning the War," carried a more cautious subtitle — "But will Putin Invade?" In it she argues that with the consolidation of civil society, national unity, and effective government, "Ukraine has steadily been pushing back the Russian-led insurgents." The greatest unknown, Freeland conceded, was whether there would be any further Russian escalation.

By December, Freeland's optimism had subsided and, in an article in Prospect Magazine, concluded that Putin has been improvising all along and that his erratic moves over the preceding 14 years are making him more, not less dangerous in the future.

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Ukraine says 27 suspected saboteurs detained in Odesa

(RFE/RL)—Ukrainian authorities say they have detained 27 alleged members of a "saboteur" group in the Black Sea port city of Odesa.

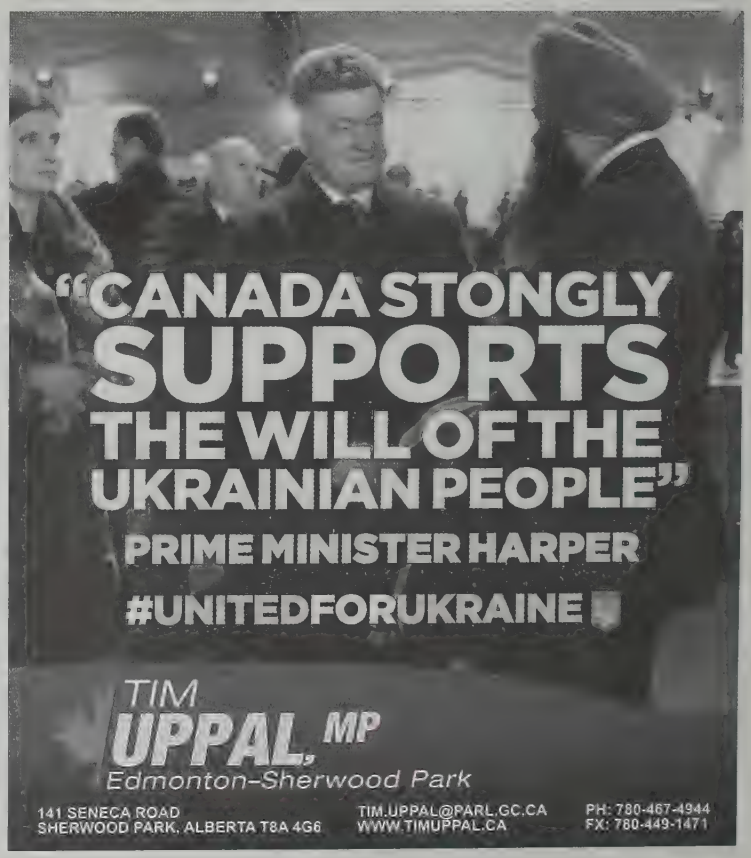
President Petro Poroshenko's press secretary, Svyatoslav Tseholko, said on Facebook on April 9 that Security Service (SBU) chief Valentyn Nalyvaychenko reported the suspects' detention to Poroshenko.

According to Tseholko, investigators found grenade launchers and maps of Odesa's ports in the suspects' possession. He said two of those detained are also suspected of plotting to kill a lawmaker.

The previous week, the SBU said it detained three people suspected of involvement in a series of bombings in Odesa, some of them targeting organizations with ties to soldiers fighting against Russian-backed rebels in eastern Ukraine.

Ukrainian authorities blamed those blasts on Russia and the rebels who hold parts of the eastern provinces of Donetsk and Luhansk.

Odesa lies on territory coveted by the separatists.



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Психологічна травма як наслідок військових подій в Україні

Дагмара Турчин- Дувірак,
пресовий референт НТШ.

13 березня у Пластовій Домівці в Торонто, що на вул.Кінгсвей, відбулася доповідь Наукового Товариства ім.Шевченка на надзвичайно актуальну тему, а саме: "Психологічна травма як наслідок військових подій: що можна сподіватися від учасників Майдану і АТО". Доповідача, д-ра Ростислава Шемечка з України, представила мгр.Ірина Микитюк. Д-р Ростислав Шемечко є відомим фахівцем з психології та педагогіки. Д-р Шемечко вчився в Люблінському та Римському католицькому університетах. В останньому на факультеті психології захистив магістерську та докторську праці. У Львівському університеті здобув також дипломи юриста і психолога. Д-р Шемечко викладає на кафедрі психології Українського Католицького Університету у Львові, де також обіймає посаду заступника Інституту психічного здоров'я.

ФОТО — МИКОЛА СВАРНИК
Д-р Ростислав Шемечко під час доповіді.

Свою доповідь д-р Шемечко розпочав з характеристики психологічної травми. Отже, травма це не захворювання, а пережиття реальної чи потенційної загрози життю, пережиття будь-якого насильства над людиною. Травма виникає тоді, коли людина перед лицем такої загрози почувається безсилою. Психологічно травмованими можуть стати не лише безпосередні учасники такої ситуації, а й її свідки, а також близькі та друзі потерпілої людини. В момент загрозливої ситуації, коли людина неспроможна реагувати природньо, захищаючись чи втікаючи, відбувається особливий стан "замороження" – людина начебто втрачає зв'язок з фізичним тілом і не відчуває ні болю, ні страху. Але тоді, коли жах закінчується, відбувається травма.

Люди, що переживають психологічну травму, звичайно про це не говорять. Однак, про їхню травму свідчить цілий ряд симптомів. Серед них - уникання обговорення пережитої страшної ситуації, неспокій, зляканість, брак сну, кошмарні марення у сні, замкнутість, почуття, що їх ніхто не розуміє. Дуже часто якесь сказане слово чи побачений образ стає спусковим механізмом, який викликає раптові спалахи фрагментованої пам'яті пережитого жаху. На загал, травмована людина переживає кілька фаз. Перша – шок, що характеризується втратою відчуття реальності. Друга – реактивна, коли людина прагне забути про пережите, та вдається при цьому до різних способів: дехто запиває, інші поринають в азартні ігри, ще інші проводять увесь час на роботі, або замикаються в інтернеті тощо. Третя фаза – пошуки виходу: людина пробує знайти причину та значення того, що сталося, знайти винного. Четверта – пермутація, відновлення та будування нового життя.

Серед тих людей, що пережили жахливі події, 90% матимуть симптоми психологічної травми. До місяця після пережитих подій, 70% зцілюються. 30% залишаються травмованими, і якщо їм не допомогти, травми переростають у хронічні психічні хвороби.

Як допомогти травмованим людям? Д-р Шемечко пропонує кілька кроків. Перший – по можливості забрати людину з місця травми. Наступний – дозволити людині говорити про пережите, намагатися відтворити хронологічну послідовність подій. При цьому, дуже важливо не силувати до розмови – людина сама повинна до неї дозріти. Також, важливо дати людині висловлювати почуття та підтримувати її. Ще один необхідний крок – шукати і надавати значення пережитому, а часто – переформулювати пережиту ситуацію. Тут д-р Шемечко навів приклад хлопця, що втратив товариша, який був поряд з ним під час масового розстрілу мітингуючих на Майдані в лютому 2014 року. Хлопець звинувачував себе у загибелі товариша. Для психолога важливо було допомогти йому усвідомити, що це не його вина, що на місці товариша міг бути він сам, та що жертва ця була недаремною. Врешті, надзвичайно важливо пояснити людині, що те, що з нею відбувається, не божевілля, як багато з травмованих людей міркує, а нормальна реакція на ненормальну ситуацію.

Як результат всіх згаданих кроків, інформація про травматичну ситуацію в мозку людини "розкорковується" та переходить з травматичної імпліцитної пам'яті в пам'ять експліцитну, автобіографічну, а людина починає шлях повернення до нормального життя.

Д-р Шемечко присвятив окрему увагу питанню, як допомагати тим, в яких загинули рідні. Тут треба не лише дати їм можливість плакати і говорити про загиблих, але також берегти про них пам'ять та надати змісту їхній втраті. Мотто має стати думка: вони віддали життя за нас, а ми віддячимо їм тим, що житимемо гідно!

Доповідь д-ра Шемечка викликала багато питань.Одне з них– як дають собі раду психологи в Україні з усіми тими, хто потребує допомоги? Д-р Шемечко розповів про тренування психологів, про відкриття центрів допомоги при церквах та відповідний вишкіл священиків. Справді, сьогодні все українське суспільство переживає велику психологічну травму. Щоб вийти з болісної кризової ситуації, в якій перебуває нині Україна, мусимо навчитися ту травму переборювати.

Ярош призначений радником головнокомандувача ЗСУ

(Радіо Свобода)—Начальник Генерального штабу Віктор Муженко і провідник Добровольчого українського корпусу «Правого сектору» дійшли згоди щодо призначення Дмитра Яроша радником головнокомандувача ЗСУ. Про це йдеться у повідомленні Українського кризового медіацентру.

Як зазначено у повідомленні, Муженко та Ярош домовилися під час зустрічі в суботу в Генеральному штабі про формат співпраці ДУК зі Збройними силами України.

«Бійці ДУК у багатьох боях гідно проявили свою високу мотивованість та бойовий дух.

Лідер «Правого сектору» Дмитро Ярош

Їхній досвід та знання працюватимуть на розвиток усіх Збройних сил», – заявив начальник Генерального штабу.

Дмитро Ярош наголосив, що єдність є ключовою умовою подальшої успішної боротьби та виявив готовність вибудовувати взаємодію та інтеграцію добровольчих батальйонів у ЗСУ.

«Ми шукатимемо також законодавчого відображення цих реалій ведення війни зокрема і для побудови соціального захисту таких бійців та їхніх сімей. Українці повинні мати впевненість у своїй армії, довіру до її керівництва та відчуття готовності Збройних сил в будь-який момент захистити нашу незалежність та вільний вибір нашого народу», – наголосив Ярош.

'I wanted to die'

In Russia, a woman's life unravels after trip to Kyiv

By Andrei Shary, Olga Rasskazova and Claire Bigg

Up until last year, Natalya Romanenko was a highly regarded musician in her hometown of Khabarovsk, in Russia's Far East.

The award-winning Ukrainian choir she directed for 20 years was a source of pride for the city, earning her official accolades and the esteem of fellow Khabarovsk residents.

All this came to an abrupt end in 2014, as Romanenko's life unraveled amid Ukraine's bitter standoff with Russia.

The Russian-born musician, who has Ukrainian roots, is now jobless, reeling from a vicious attack, and battling fraud charges. Her choir has been evicted from its premises and stripped of state funding.

"Suddenly no one remembered my awards," she tells RFE/RL. "When I was fired, no one defended me."

Romanenko says her troubles began after she traveled to Kyiv in February 2014 at the height of the Euromaidan protests that led to the ouster of Ukraine's Russia-friendly president, Viktor Yanukovych.

"I came under huge pressure the moment I returned to Khabarovsk, which took me by surprise," she says. "I had not expected relations to be so damaged that I would feel the repercussions, 9,000 kilometers away from Kyiv."

Romanenko, a mother of two, was detained upon arrival at the Khabarovsk airport and taken to the offices of the Russian federal security service (FSB), where she says she was questioned for almost 15 hours over her trip.

"They yelled at me, they threatened me, it was awful," she says.

Shortly after her detention, a video emerged online in which Romanenko accused the West of orchestrating the Kyiv protests and described Yanukovych's removal as an "unconstitutional coup."

The video was then broadcast on local state-run television.

Romanenko, who now professes sympathy for the Euromaidan protesters, claims she was pressured into making the statements.

"They gave me a text and told me to recite it as faithfully as possible," she says. "My mind was so paralyzed that I said these things in front of the camera, I was like on automatic pilot. When I saw the television report, I just wanted to die."

Romanenko says her choir, Batkyvska Krinitsya (Fount of the Motherland), soon stopped receiving invitations to concerts and festivals.

She maintains the group has no political agenda and has refrained from commenting on the events in Ukraine.

The House of Culture in the town of Gorky, where the choir was formally registered, then fired her and barred the ensemble from using its hall for rehearsals.

House of Culture officials deny their decision was connected to Romanenko's ties with Ukraine.

Director Irina Dekhnich says Romanenko was let go because her choir had failed to appear at her institution for several months.

Romanenko's contention that the choir had opted to rehearse in other halls closer to Khabarovsk failed to appease culture officials.

Dekhnich argues that she had not granted Batkyvska Krinitsya permission to rehearse in other locations and that she was unable to "control" Romanenko.

The choir director managed to be reinstated twice in court after being fired twice.

She is now formally on sick leave and will be dismissed on April 3 as part of what Dekhnich calls a "staff redundancy plan."

Romanenko has also lost her job at the Interior Ministry, where she was employed as a soloist in the police's local song and dance ensemble.

She was accused of breaching the rules of service by working with another choir, although she insists her employment at the Gorky House of Culture was allowed by her contract. She has filed an appeal.

The musician's woes with the police don't end here.

Prosecutors have since leveled criminal charges against her for alleged "fraud in obtaining payments."

Romanenko believes the FSB is behind the case — noting that, according to legal documents, FSB officers, not Interior Ministry officials, conducted the probe into her activities.

Because the investigation is still under way, she is barred from leaving the city.

Meanwhile, the Ukrainian choir continued losing its partners in Khabarovsk.

In August 2014, it was evicted from the social center Sodruzhestvo (Community), where it had had its office for four years. The center simply said the cooperation agreement had "expired."

"The center's director was pressured into kicking us out, we were told we had two hours to leave," Romanenko recalls. "The director got very scared because the word 'Ukraine' triggers a certain phobia, and my name is directly associated with Ukraine."

In February 2015, the choir was denied access to its last available rehearsal hall, at a veterans' center in Khabarovsk — allegedly for financial reasons.

The Assembly of People of the Khabarovsk Region, an organization representing the region's ethnic minorities, has since stepped forward and put a hall at the group's disposal.

The latest blow came earlier this month, when Romanenko was doused with "zelyonka" — a bright-green, topical antiseptic once thrown at Yanukovych's opponents in Ukraine.

The attack, which took place in broad daylight as she strolled in downtown Khabarovsk, has left her deeply shaken.

"I raised my eyes because a person was blocking my way, then another person came very close to me from the left side," she recalls. "Zelyonka was sprayed over me. At first I didn't realize it was zelyonka, I touched my cheek and I thought: 'Could it be acid?'"

Her assailants also called her a "banderovka," a slur commonly used in Russia to describe Ukrainians loyal to the new Western-leaning government in Kyiv.

Romanenko's plight bodes ill for the large ethnic Ukrainian community living in eastern Russia. The Khabarovsk region is home to some 25,000 ethnic Ukrainians, and the neighboring Primorsky region to about 50,000.

The embattled musician receives much-needed moral and material support from her few remaining friends in Khabarovsk.

"They call it humanitarian aid," she half-heartedly jokes.

But were it not for her ban on traveling and the desire to clear her name, Romanenko says she would seriously consider leaving Russia for good.

"I am disgusted by my country," she says. "I am disgusted by the way I was treated, the way they wiped their feet on me."

Turkey decries abuses in Crimea

(RFE/RL)—Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu has described the situation in the Ukrainian peninsula of Crimea, which was annexed by Russia in March 2014, as "unacceptable."

Addressing a news conference in Lithuania on April 3, Cavusoglu said that the Crimean people, particularly Turkic-speaking Tatars, have been "oppressed."

He added that Turkey will send an "informal mission to observe human rights violations in Crimea soon."

Turkey has close cultural bonds to Crimea's indigenous Muslim Tatars, who bitterly opposed Russia's seizure of the Black Sea peninsula last year.

Ankara did not join Western sanctions over the annexation, but Cavusoglu insisted Turkey would "never recognize the illegal annexation" of the peninsula.

Cavusoglu's statement comes two days after Crimea's only Tatar-language television broadcaster, ATR, was shut down after it failed to register the channel with Russian authorities by a March 31 deadline.

Russia's media oversight body Roskomnadzor, citing technicalities, rejected several attempts by ATR to register for a Russian broadcast license.

Several ATR affiliates were also shut down.

The United States on April 1 condemned the media outlets' de facto closure, calling it the "latest in a string of actions that undermine freedom of expression in Crimea."

U.S. State Department spokeswoman Marie Harf said the closure followed a "yearlong crusade to silence the Crimean Tatar population and others who oppose Russia's occupation."

She noted Crimean Tatars have been singled out and subjected to a "pattern of discrimination, intimidation, and persecution."

Rights watchdog Amnesty International has called the refusal to register ATR a "blatant attack on freedom of expression, dressed up as an administrative procedure," and "a crude attempt to stifle independent media, gag dissenting voices, and intimidate the Crimean Tatar community."

Dutch court names Ukraine party in Scythian gold lawsuit

(RFE/RL)—A Dutch court has granted Ukraine's request to be a party in the high-profile Scythian gold lawsuit.

Amsterdam's district court ruled April 8 that Ukraine is eligible to claims rights to the disputed objects.

Ukraine will now have to file an application to participate in the proceedings by May 20.

A collection of more than 1,000 gold items representing ancient Scythian civilization, was sent to the Allard Pierson Museum in Amsterdam in February 2014 for an exhibition titled "Crimea: Gold and Secrets of the Black Sea."

The artifacts came from five Ukrainian museums, four of which are located in Crimea.

In March, following Crimea's annexation by Russia, the Ukrainian government demanded the entire collection be returned to Kyiv. Crimea's Kremlin-backed authorities have dismissed the claims.

The exhibition closed on August 31, but the items remain in the Netherlands.

In November, the four Crimean museums filed a lawsuit to a court in Amsterdam demanding that the Allard Pierson Museum return the Crimean part of the collection.

Kharkiv explosion targets national flag memorial

(RFE/RL)—A bomb has been detonated under a national flag memorial in Ukraine's eastern city of Kharkiv.

The local prosecutor's office says the incident took place at 3.40 a.m. on April 7. The explosion damaged part of the memorial and shattered windows at the nearby Medical University building. Nobody was hurt in the blast. No group claimed responsibility for the attack.

A series of bomb blasts have hit Kharkiv and another government-controlled eastern Ukrainian city, Odesa, in recent months.

Most of the attacks seemed to target organizations with ties to soldiers battling pro-Russian separatists in Ukraine's east.

Ukrainian authorities blamed the explosions on Russia and the rebels who hold parts of Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

We extend Easter greetings to the whole Ukrainian community especially our readers!

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Staff & Administration of Ukrainian News

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French far-right leader and National Front Party, Marine Le Pen, exits from a polling booth after voting for the second round of local elections, Sunday, March 29, 2015

Russia 'bought' French far-Right support over Crimea

By David Chazan,
The Telegraph, April 4, 2015

France's Front National may have been given a multi-million-euro loan by a Russian bank as a "reward" for backing President Putin's annexation of Crimea, according to text messages released by Russian hackers.

The publication of excerpts from the messages by the French news website Mediapart has rekindled accusations that Moscow is bankrolling the Front National and other European far-Right groups.

However, Marine Le Pen, the Front National leader, said it was "insane" to interpret more than 1,100 pages of text messages as showing that she had agreed to endorse the controversial Crimean referendum last year in return for funding.

The messages, alleged to have been sent or received by the head of the Kremlin internal affairs department, Timur Prokopenko, were hacked by a Russian opposition group, Anonymous International, and posted on its website.

One was received on March 17 last year from "Kostia", a figure identified by the opposition group as a governing party MP, Konstantin Rykov.

"Marine Le Pen has officially recognised the results of the referendum in Crimea," it read.

"She hasn't betrayed our expectations," the Kremlin official replied.

"It will be necessary to thank the French in one way or another ... It's important," Kostia said.

"Yes. Super!" the Kremlin official responded.

Eight months later, when the Front National received a 9 million euro (C$12.3m) loan from the First Czech-Russian Bank in November last year, Le Pen insisted it was a purely commercial transaction unrelated to her support for Mr Putin over Crimea or other issues.

She said the party had been denied funds by French banks.

The loan was the first instalment of Russian-backed loans of 40m Euros that would fund the cash-strapped Front National in the run-up to the 2017 presidential campaign, Mediapart reported.

Le Pen and other party leaders denied knowing the two men in the text exchange.

Le Pen has visited Moscow several times and makes no secret of her admiration for Mr Putin, whom she has often described as "strong".

She has urged France to recognise Crimea as part of Russia.

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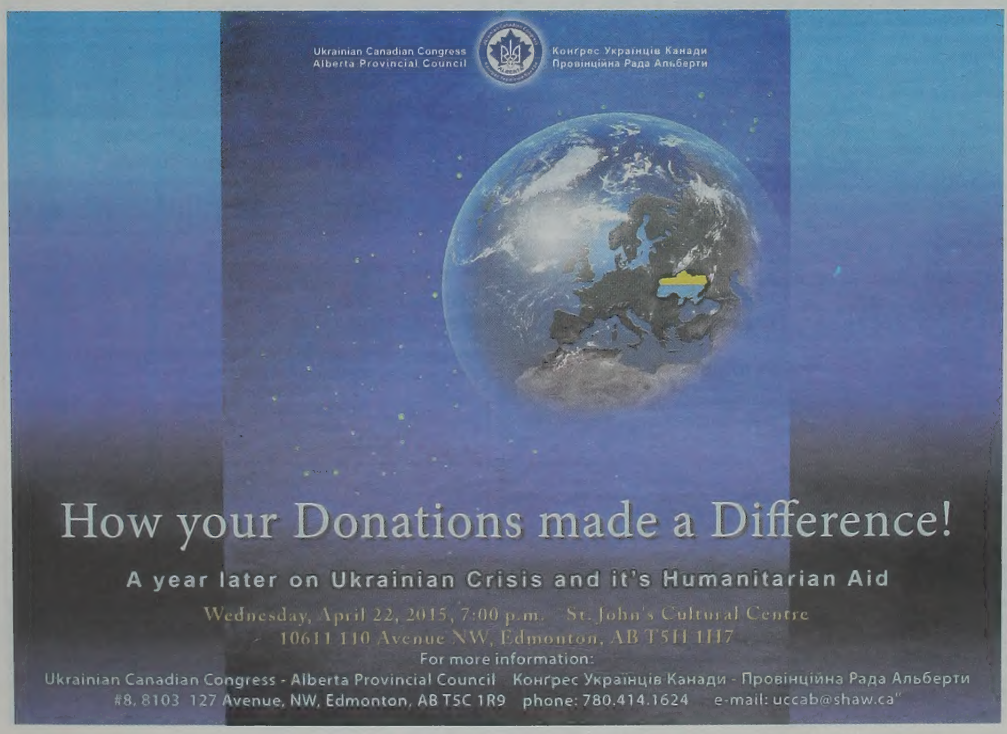
Russian police raid Poroshenko chocolate factory

(RFE/RL)--Russian officials say the raid they have conducted on a chocolate factory owned by Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko was seeking evidence for a tax-fraud case.

Russian news agencies said masked riot police surrounded a Roshen factory in the western city of Lipetsk on April 1 and blocked the entrance.

Vladimir Markin, spokesman for Russia's Investigative Committee, said the detectives were searching for material related to a suspected fraudulent tax rebate received by Roshen.



Vyacheslav Shevchuk tries to rally Ukraine's players

Morata ensures Spain beat Ukraine

(UEFA)—Álvaro Morata struck his first Spain goal to gain them three vital UEFA EURO 2016 qualifying Group C points against Ukraine in Seville, March 27.

Spain's lead could not have come at a more valuable time. The match began with the European champions cutting through Ukraine's defence at will – using their full repertoire of one-touch passing and one-twos.

Jordi Alba, David Silva and Morata all had openings within sight of goal but did not profit. Ukraine, for their part, were both patient and able. Whenever they had a dead-ball situation they used it to great effect. Ruslan Rotan's free-kick let Artem Fedetsky volley at will, but he sliced it. Then Rotan himself speared a shot just past Iker Casillas's right-hand post.

So it was with relief the crowd greeted Morata's breakthrough. Andrés Iniesta's switch of play and Koke's superb volleyed pass down the middle was finished by the Juventus man edging the ball over Andriy Pyatov.

For once, just before the interval, Vicente Del Bosque's side showed that they too knew how to work a set piece. Silva's well-flighted ball from the right edge of the box was met by Sergio Ramos whose header smacked the face of the bar.

Throughout the second half La Roja regretted it. Rotan continued to threaten and three times in the space of 15 minutes he drew exceptional saves from Spain's captain. But the defending champions held on to strengthen their grip on a qualifying place, though they lost Alba to injury with 12 minutes left.

Dnipro hang on to oust Ajax

(UEFA)—FC Dnipro Dnipropetrovsk joined compatriots FC Dynamo Kyiv in the UEFA Europa League quarter-finals, keeping cool heads to get the better of AFC Ajax after extra time in Amsterdam, March 19.

The Dutch champions had struggled to lay a glove on their visitors, who went into this round of 16 second leg 1-0 to the good, and were unable to press their advantage after Riechedly Bazoer made it 1-1 on aggregate. Yevhen Konoplyanka silenced the Amsterdam Arena crowd with a stylish finish seven minutes into overtime, and while Mike van der Hoorn restored Ajax's lead on the night, away goals saw them off.

With five first-choice players absent through injury or suspension, and coach Myron Markevych laid up with a virus, Dnipro rode their luck to begin with, goalkeeper Denys Boyko making a fine save to fend away Anwar El Ghazi's drive after seven minutes. Under Olexandr Ivanov, they then set about stifling their hosts.

Arkadiusz Milik went close with a header for Frank de Boer's side just before the interval, yet the coach cut a frustrated figure until Ajax got a fortunate break on 60 minutes. Egidio failed to cut out a ball from the left, inviting Bazoer to bear down on goal and beat Boyko with a firm hit.

Dnipro reshuffled and might have equalised on 71 minutes, Roman Bezus unsighted as a free-kick dropped onto his head and crept wide of Jasper Cillessen's right-hand post. Extra time then provided the stage for skipper Konoplyanka to make his star turn, cutting in from the left and skirting the edge of the box before curling a low shot inside Cillessen's left-hand post.

Van der Hoorn bravely nodded into the unguarded net after a rebound from Kolbeinn Sigthórsson's header dropped invitingly in the dying minutes, but Ajax could not finish Dnipro off.

Senators urge FIFA to take World Cup away from Russia

(RFE/RL)—Thirteen U.S. senators have written to FIFA, soccer's world governing body, urging the organization to replace Russia as host of the 2018 World Cup.

Senators Robert Menendez (Democrat-New Jersey) and Ron Johnson (Republican-Wisconsin) organized the letter, released on April 1, calling on FIFA to move the soccer championship because of Russia's "ongoing violations of the territorial integrity of Ukraine."

Nine Republicans — including former presidential candidate John McCain — and four Democrats signed the letter.

"Allowing Russia to host the FIFA World Cup inappropriately bolsters the prestige of...[Russian President Vladimir Putin's]...regime at a time when it should be condemned," the senators said.

FIFA has thus far rejected calls for the event — one of the world's top sporting events — to be moved away from Russia.

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